BING

SUMMER 2007

No. 146

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY

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(a) American and Canadian members who should send their remittances in U.S. dollars to F. B. Wiggins
(b) Australian and New Zealand members who should pay David Currington in Australian dollars

Articles for inclusion in the magazine should be sent to the Magazine Editor or the American Co-Editor.

Other Correspondence concerning membership, non-arrival of the magazine or other aspects of the club's affairs should either be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer or to your local representative please.

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EDITORIAL

For most ICC members, receiving the latest edition of BING magazine is always a cause for celebration. But the joy and happiness usually associated with the task of carefully opening the envelope to reveal a sparkling new issue, quickly turned to one of shock and sorrow with our Spring issue. For that is where most of us first learned of the untimely passing of Laura Wiggins, spouse of our American / Canadian representative, Wig Wiggins. In aiding her beloved husband, Laura was a tremendous asset to the ICC, and we shall always be indebted to her for her tireless devotion to our cause. We all share the grief Wig and his family bear, and will long lament the void her death has left in our own ICC family.

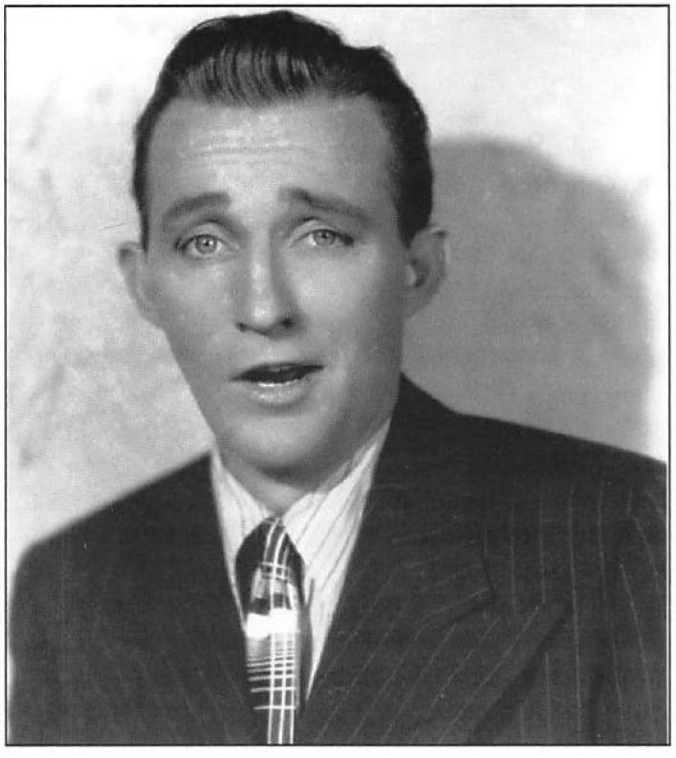
We also note with great sadness the passing of Bing's *Here Is My Heart* and *She Loves Me Not* co-star, Kitty Carlisle Hart, as well as his "Silver Bells" and "Sunshine Cake" duet partner, Carol Richards.

While noting the passing of these exceptional talents, we also must make note that this August 16th marks the 30th anniversary of the death of Elvis Presley, just two months prior to Bing's demise. There is sure to be a media frenzy around that date, with TV specials, candlelight vigils, and new releases all devoted to the king of rock & roll. Deservedly so, of course, for Presley was a pioneer in his field, and left the world all too soon. But perhaps during this media blitz, it would be a good time for some positive publicity for Bing as well. I would urge members to contact their local news outlets, radio stations, newspapers, etc. to remind them of the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing on October 14. Let's see if we can have our own "Bing blitz" within the media outlets come October. Turner Classic Movies continued to remember Bing's birthday, albeit a day early, by showcasing five of his movies on May 2nd. That was a step in the right direction!

There are two exciting new CD releases you'll want to add to your collections. The first, on the JSP records label, is a 4-CD box set titled *Bing Crosby: The Vintage Years*. It's sure to be of interest, with two of the CD's featuring rare performances from Bing's legendary Kraft Music Hall broadcasts of the late 1930's, most of which are making their CD debut. The second, produced with the help of my co-editor Malcolm Macfarlane, is on the Sepia label. It's a follow-up to last year's *Good & Rare* release, this being titled *Good & Rare Volume 2*. It features 26 more songs from Bing's Decca catalog, circa 1949-55, none of which have been issued on compact disc previously. Ken Crossland has full details of both releases in *Keeping Track*.

Also, be on the look out for a new must-have book titled *Going My Way - Bing Crosby And American Culture* by Ruth Prigozy and Walter Raubicheck. It is comprised of many of the papers presented at the November 2002 Hofstra University conference on *Bing Crosby and American Culture*, and promises to be an essential tool in illustrating Bing's impact on American culture. It hits bookshelves November 1st. See *Books 'N' Bing* for further information.

Greg Van Beek



In our last issue, I first of all told you about an impending radio series to be called 'On The Crosby Trail' and at the last moment I had to tell you that it had been delayed. It now seems to be on track to be broadcast later this year, so keep a watch for it. I'll try and alert members outside the UK through the Bing Crosby Internet Museum as they will be able to listen to it via the Internet.

This edition of the magazine has a wide variety of articles ranging from the early days of Bing's career to Crosby matters arising in the last few weeks. All sorts of people are out there doing their bit for Bing. Jon Oye and, Martin McQuade have come up with some original research and we owe both our front and back covers to Jon as well. The front cover was a black and white photo which Jon has colorized especially for us. The letter to Dwight Hemion and Gary Smith on the inside back cover was written by Bing following the success of the Bell Telephone Jubilee show in 1976 with Liza Minnelli. As part of my research for the book Ken Crossland and I are writing about Perry Como, I have been in touch with Dwight Hemion and I'll tell you more later in this issue.

After my 'brainstorm' last year, when I forgot the Leeds meeting when booking a holiday to China, I have a prominent note on my calendar this year to prevent a reoccurrence. So I'll be there and we have some interesting material to show you.

Malcolm Macfarlane

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SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT

It will not have escaped members' attention that whilst the magazine was in its final stage of preparation for the last issue, we had to announce the sad passing of **Laura Wiggins**. Laura was unstinting in her support for Wig and she formed 50 per cent of the US team that brought members their magazine and Jonzo issues over a 16 year period. I feel that it is important for members to know about Laura's work on behalf of the ICC and it will be a great comfort to Wig to learn that we appreciate what she did to support him and the International Club Crosby.

Laura was a personal friend to Judy and I and we admired her tenacity, her capacity for life and especially her wisdom. Laura was a good conversationalist and she could quickly get to the kernel of any discussion and anyone trying to be smart with her would receive a very quick riposte! Laura cooked beautifully and was a wonderful hostess who just happened to bake superb cookies.

Laura gave hundreds of hours in support of the ICC, helping Wig grow the US/Canadian membership from 45 to over 500 and her support and encouragement will be sorely missed. To Wig, we extend our heartfelt condolences and wish him well as he continues with his ICC duties.

****

The summer scene is very quiet, Crosby wise, and whilst we await new CDs and DVDs it is perhaps a good time to pull out, dust down and play some of our long neglected LPs, EPs and in some cases 78's! The quality and warmth of the LP sound is well worth revisiting and even a 78 can revive happy memories of the time when we had only these discs to play.

NEW MEMBERS

Happily and despite losing so many members this past year, we are delighted to extend a warm welcome to the following new friends. We are confident that they will gain much by being members of the ICC.

CANADA

Shirley Chiang (Vancouver, British Columbia), Shirley Peal (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Elaine Shofer (Winnipeg, Manitoba)

UNITED STATES

Mrs. A P Blaire (Thibodaux, Louisiana), Leo Yolo (Seattle, Washington), Jane Dembling (Rancho Cardova, California), Stanley Diebel (Western Springs, Illinois), Robert Hartfield (Berwyn, Illinois), Richard Jakubowski (Clerk, New Jersey), Tim Lanier (Kingston, North Carolina), Jim Lindsay (Indianapolis, Indiana), Lonnie Reeves (Marissa, Illinois), Russell Rubert (King Of Prussia, Pennsylvania), Colleen Watkins (Martinez, Georgia) Steve Van Benschoten (Tenafly, New Jersey), Charles Ward (Ellington, Connecticut),

ENGLAND

Jack Winegrad (Westcliffe-on–Sea, Essex)

DONATIONS

Our list of generous supporters grows with each issue and we extend our thanks to them in the knowledge that their generosity helps keep the ICC a viable and thriving club. We salute: -

Milton Cummings (Groton, Connecticut), Philip Crosland (Wilmington, Delaware), Judy Schmid (Syracuse, New York), Greg Van Beek (West Bend, Wisconsin), Marci Kukla (Rockford, Illinois), Ted Wegenblast (Mineola, New York), Charles Campbell (Newington Square, Pennsylvania), Al O'Hagan (Deptford, New Jersey), Norman Wolfe (Cumming, Georgia), George De Lodzia (West Kingston, Rhode Island), Paul Murphy (Lexington, Kentucky), Jim Allen (Newark, California), Chris Hastalis (North Valley Stream, New York), Frank Heiderer (San Diego, California), Ralph Morris (Bethlehem, Pennsylvania), Dick Heman (Frankfort, Kentucky), Laurence Kieran (New York, New York), John Sarro (Johnston, Rhode Island), Helen Tolton (Lakeport, California), Stanley Shipp (Port Hope, Michigan), Frank Rodgers (Yountville, California), David Currie (Winter Park,

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Further donations will be acknowledged in the winter 2007 issue of BING.

DEATHS

With sadness I draw members' attention to the passing of Mr. **Chris Hall** (Acocks Green, Birmingham). We extend our sincere condolences to the family and friends of Chris.

TROUBADOUR

4 copies of this entertaining book remain for sale at £15.99 each and may be obtained from me at my home address.

MEMBERSHIP

Members finally rallied to the cajoling of Wig and myself and at the time of compiling this report we had a net loss of 55 members. Most losses were age or death related and both Wig and I feel that it is inevitable that this trend will continue. In consequence it is almost certain that we will have to raise subscriptions in 2008. However, we still have income and expenditure under review and we will not make a decision until the end of the year. Postal rates have risen in the US and here in the UK the costs of publishing BING have gone up. We will always be very grateful for any donations to club funds that members may wish to make.

CALENDAR 2008

Work is well advanced for next year's calendar. The price will be the same as last year and most members will receive a separate flyer to enable them to order it now.

LEEDS

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Leeds meeting on October 7th and please see the notice about this later in the magazine.

Until winter, my kindest regards to all members.

Michael Crampton

Barry's Birthday Bash

Once again, on the 5th May, Barry Whittingham played host to a number of UK ICC members to celebrate Bing's birth date. Barry has made considerable changes to his 'music museum' at his home in Nottingham which includes a vast and well-organised collection of a great many artistes from the era of good music with Bing in pride of place. What was Barry's double garage has now been converted to a sort of cinema where we were entertained by his usual rare and previously unseen DVD footage via a large TV screen. We were all well catered for and appreciate the considerable effort that Barry went to in entertaining his guests. Among those present were Ken Heaton, Trevor Wagstaff, Barry Newbold, George Patmore, Barry's friend Andy and Bert Bishop.

Bert Bishop

'San Fernando Valley' - 1944

Geoff Boucher wrote an interesting article for the *Los Angeles Times* of May 6 about one of Bing's biggest hits.

Few pop-culture figures resonated with American troops in World War II the way Bing Crosby did. He was a tireless figure on USO tours in Europe and when his rich, dignified baritone gave them "White Christmas" or "I'll Be Home for Christmas," the weary soldiers heard the sound of the home front and the promise of peacetime. So in 1944, when Crosby hit No. 1 with a jaunty song called "San Fernando Valley," it was no surprise that GIs heard it as a call to build their postwar lives in a new Eden out west.

Oh, I'm packing my grip
And I'm leaving today,
'Cause I'm taking a trip
California way
I'm gonna settle down and never more roam
And make the San Fernando Valley my home.

It seemed as if the chamber of commerce had ordered up a new civic anthem to sell wood-frame

houses in "America's suburb." That was hardly the case. The ditty was written by Gordon Jenkins, a songwriter whose work included "That's All I Ask," "When I Fall in Love," "My Foolish Heart," "September of My Years" *[Editor: this is incorrect – Jenkins did not write these but he did write songs such as "Homesick. That's All" and "P.S. I Love You"]* and many others. On "San Fernando Valley," he was writing a quick-money theme for a 1943 Roy Rogers western of the same title. The movie was filmed in the Valley, and while it faded quickly from memory, its song became a hit — which shocked and somewhat embarrassed Jenkins.

"I heard him say on an old radio show that he hated the song," said Bruce Jenkins, a journalist and the author of "Goodbye," a biography of his father. "He thought it was complete junk, but something that might pay a few bills. Then it turned into a big hit, and as he said later, 'You feel differently about a song once the checks start rolling in.'"

The songwriter, a Missouri native, arrived in Los Angeles in 1938 with a plan to score Hollywood films. That opportunity soured him though, and he moved to Sherman Oaks to avoid "the song-plugging and politics of Hollywood." The place was bucolic and quaint, which inspired his reference to "hitting the trail to cow country" in the song.

Still, the language that probably resonated with men fresh from combat was more about redemption than landscape.

I'll forget my sins,
I'll be makin' new friends,
Where the West begins
And the sunset ends
'Cause I've decided where yours truly should be
and it's the San Fernando Valley for me.

Gordon Jenkins may have cashed the checks, but he never quite understood the allure of his toss-off No. 1 hit. His son said the house was always full of music, but that song never once was played.

"I guarantee you that," the younger Jenkins says. "He wanted to keep making money off of it, but he also wished there was a way to do it without anybody hearing the thing. It bugged him when it came on the radio."

Maybe he didn't want to hear all those newcomers to the Valley whistling it on the sidewalks; Jenkins packed his own bags and moved to Malibu in 1946.

Geoff Boucher

Bing Crosby Theatre Sign Lit Up

The new marquee for the Bing Crosby Theater was dedicated and "lit" on April 19.

Bill Stimson, chair of the Advocates for The Bing Crosby Theater was interviewed before the event itself and said:

"This is a huge thrill for us. After all the work that has gone in to obtaining the cooperation of Mitch Silver, the theater owner, and Bing's widow, Kathryn Crosby, to get the theater renamed, and raising the money for the manufacture and installation of the marquee, it will be great to actually see it in place."

The sign being put in place

A Bing Crosby film festival took place during the day and a private reception was held for theater supporters just prior to the dedication and lighting. The film festival featured three classic Crosby films, including *Birth of the Blues, Road to Singapore* and *High Society*.

The brief dedication ceremony took place in the theater lobby at 7 p.m. when Howard Crosby, a nephew of Bing's who lives in Walla Walla, Washington, officially turned on the new sign. In his remarks,

Howard speculated Bing would be pleased by the theater name – though possibly a little embarrassed. Howard said Bing hated any hint of flattery or fuss over his fame. The uncle he knew was the casual, witty man anyone would recognize from screen performances, Howard said. He recalled golfing with Bing once when a fan came over and, to make conversation, asked, "Are you doing much golfing these days, Bing?" Bing replied: "No. Just daylight hours."

Bing gets a "Harvey"

We gave advance details of the Harvey Award Dinner in our last issue. Kathy Brown (from RosemaryClooney.com) and our own Judy Schmid were there and send their report.

James Stewart, popular movie star and World War II US Air Force pilot, was born and raised in a small city east of Pittsburgh called Indiana, Pennsylvania. Folks in his home town established a museum in his honor at the public library - the library which stands at the exact spot his father's hardware store stood for years. Mr. Stewart, not one to boast, accepted the idea of the museum as he knew it would benefit the area he still loved. He visited a few times in his later years and donated many of his own items - his desk and furniture from his Hollywood office, his costumes and Air Force uniforms, and countless awards.

In the past few years, the Board of Directors of the Museum has held an annual fundraiser and banquet, and friends of Jimmy's have been honored. In the recent past, honorees have included the Stewart family, actress June Allyson, actor Robert Wagner, and this year's co-emcees, Rich Little and Nick Clooney. This year's honorees were Bing Crosby and Kathryn Grant Crosby. Bing was the second posthumous honoree, as Spencer Tracy was honored last year. While the Harvey Award has been reserved for actors, the George Bailey Award honors special friends of the museum and those who share the values and integrity of Stewart. Bing was awarded the "Harvey Award", and Kathryn the "George Bailey Award".

Kathryn's arrival on Friday May 19 included her attendance at a luncheon, along with her first-ever placing of her hands in cement. Rich Little and Nick Clooney joined Kathryn at the luncheon and Rich presented Kathryn with a pencil sketch of her that he'd done - quite a striking resemblance! Rich admitted he was a HUGE fan of hers when he was a teen - and *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* still ranks among his favorite films. Kathryn toured the museum, where the film *Anatomy of a Murder*, starring Jimmy and a very young Kathryn Grant, was shown on a large screen the entire weekend. She took a few minutes to pose in Jimmy's favorite booth from Chasen's Hollywood restaurant that has been reassembled at the museum. A private dinner with board members and invited guests capped the evening.

Saturday morning, while "Jimmy Stewart Week" continued with its parade of antique cars down Main Street, Kathryn was serenaded at the museum by a local chorus singing Bing-songs. The group had been rehearsing all winter, as this was their spring showcase, and it was well received by all in attendance - most folks, of course, couldn't help but sing along! Rich Little used the private luncheon at midday as an opportunity to warm up his Bing and his Jimmy Stewart impersonations - and there wasn't a dry eye at the restaurant (from laughter, naturally!) Of course, Rich couldn't resist telling the story so many Bing-fans have heard - was it really true that when Bing was filming *Rhythm on the River* with Mary Martin that her young son, Larry Hagman, was so mischievous that Bing muttered "someone oughta shoot that kid"...of course, someone did years later. Bing's daughter, Mary Frances, in her role on the 1980s TV show *Dallas* took care, belatedly, of Bing's request!

Rich presents Kathryn with his pencil sketch of her

The week's finale, the grand banquet, allowed Kathryn to spend time with many of the attendees - she autographed copies of both of her books and answered many questions about Bing. Students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania assembled a slide-show including video clips and still images of Bing in many of his roles, including a snapshot or two of him with his family. Nick Clooney opened the awards portion of the evening by alluding to Kathryn Crosby's stunning looks when her career began.

"When I saw Kathryn Grant in *The Phenix City Story* in 1955, my voice changed," he said. He went on to reminisce about Bing - a man he met when he was 18. He swept the audience back to 1950s Hollywood, when he was helping his sister Rosemary entertain at her Christmas party - she'd asked him to tend bar and as the

evening wound down, he sat to relax in the only spot he could find, seated on the floor with his back against an easy chair - a chair occupied by Bing. Rosemary called out to Bing, as Nick recalled, "It's Christmas, Bing - sing it!" And Bing obliged, singing an a-capella version of "White Christmas" - Nick said he could feel Bing's voice rumbling through the chair and across his own back as Bing sang - and it's THEN he realized that Bing never took his pipe from his mouth as he sang! Nick also praised Bing for helping boost the careers of African-American entertainers such as Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong and giving Catholics big-screen exposure through his reoccurring role of Father O'Malley in such films as "Going My Way."

"Catholics got mainstreamed by Bing Crosby," he said.

He went on, listing Bing's many accomplishments - his 'firsts', and his 'mosts' and he said, "if there was no Bing Crosby, there'd be no Rosemary Clooney". She was stuck singing silly novelty songs and it wasn't until Bing arranged for her to be in THAT movie, as he called it, that she finally got the recognition and respect she deserved. He continued, "And if no Rosemary, there'd be no Nick...and no George Clooney either!" He thanked Bing for all the success ever acquired by the Clooney family - a VERY generous comment, and the audience applauded.

Of course, sentimentality led back into raucous moments as Rich Little took his turn, imitating Bing, imitating Jimmy, and entertaining the packed hall for almost an hour. In his best Jimmy Stewart, he parodied a scene from *Anatomy of a Murder* where Jimmy asks Kathryn about something she saw - of course, in Rich's 'voice', it became a long, complex string of legalese - all done in Jimmy's style - to which Kathryn paused...and asked "could you please repeat that?" Again - more peals of laughter from a very appreciative audience. After all, a lot of people pay a lot of money to see Rich's act in Las Vegas and here they were getting something unique, in a close and comfortable space.

Flanked by Foundation President Carson Greene Jr., Kathryn holds her two awards. The Harvey Award is the one on the right.

Kathryn spoke of her two films with Jimmy - "Anatomy" and a 'bit part' as a "Party Girl" as seen by Jimmy across the alleyway in *Rear Window*. She also spoke of Bing's friendship with Jimmy, as Jimmy had appeared on Bing's radio programs a number of times in the 1940s. She also mentioned that she and Bing, while on a safari in Africa, met up with Jimmy and his wife Gloria, where they dined and compared tales of "photo shoots" and other, more "aggressive" shoots!

"Bing looked wonderful in his khakis, but Jimmy looked stupendous," she said.

She ended by expressing her hope "for an era when nice people come in first again."

The evening wrapped up with Rich singing a little Bing and Kathryn thanking everyone for remembering Bing - she encouraged everyone in attendance to watch his old movies and share them with their children and grandchildren. Nick Clooney then thanked everyone for coming - but it was almost another hour before all the guests left, as Bing's voice once again filled the hall, over the loudspeakers, and people found it difficult to leave and break the magic mood of the evening.

Judy Schmid and Kathy Brown

(Editor: Our thanks to Judy and Kathy for reporting on what must have been a wonderful occasion. Mention was made of the pencil sketch done by Rich Little and here's one he's done of Bing too. Is there no end to his talents!)

Best Pals: In Tune with The Lennon Sisters

Greg Van Beek meets some more Bing fans.

"The marvelous Lennon Sisters", as Bing Crosby once called them, are an American institution. From the moment then sixteen-year-old Dianne (Dee Dee), fourteen-year-old Peggy, twelve-year-old Kathy, and nine-year-old Janet Lennon first appeared on Lawrence Welk's Christmas Eve 1955 television show, it was love at first sight for Welk's Saturday night TV viewers and America at large. They remained a fixture on the popular show for the next thirteen years. Their captivating "girl-next-door" personas, angelic voices, and sweet harmonies garnered them the moniker of "America's sweethearts of song", a position they've held ever since.

The Lennon Sisters became role models for young women everywhere. So beloved they are that they've had the honor of performing for seven U.S. presidents; Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan. They made guest appearances on virtually every variety show on television, ranging from the Mickey Mouse Club to the Ed Sullivan show. When their incredibly successful association with the Lawrence Welk Show ended in 1969, the Lennons were given their own network variety series on ABC, *Jimmy Durante Presents the Lennon Sisters Hour*. The show attracted such top-flight guest stars as Perry Como, Sammy Davis, Jr., Bob Hope, George Burns and Jack Benny.

Six weeks before the show premiered on August 12, 1969, the sisters were forced to deal with the shooting to death of their father, William, by a deranged fan.

Beginning in 1957 and throughout the 1960's, the Lennon Sisters recorded many successful albums, one after another. From the 1970's to the present, The Lennon Sisters continue to record each year while performing in such venues as Las Vegas, Atlantic City and Branson, Missouri, where they currently can be seen. Peggy Lennon retired from performing in 1999, and was replaced by younger sister Mimi. In 2000, Dianne (Dee Dee) retired, leaving the quartet now a trio, but still retaining their famous harmonies.

On May 5th, I had the pleasure to speak with Kathy and Janet, the two original Lennon Sisters still performing, to reminisce about their remarkable fifty-year career, their latest projects, and, of course, their work with Bing Crosby.

Kathy answered the phone when I rang promptly at 11 am, and was quickly joined by Janet via a speakerphone. Our conversation started out with the tables turned a bit; the Lennons wanted to interview me, after I somewhat jokingly said "I'm sure you've done hundreds of interviews over the years, but being interviewed for *BING* magazine has to be a first!" Kathy replied, "I think it is," with Janet chiming in "definitely a first!" Kathy then asked me "how long has the BING magazine been around?" After telling them that we just celebrated our seventieth anniversary last year, they both (somewhat incredulously) responded simultaneously "unbelievable!" I quickly added our distinction with the Guinness Book of World Records as being the oldest active fan club, and Janet said, "Isn't that incredible", with Kathy adding, "Well ours is probably about fifty years, so we're right coming behind you!"

I gave them a little background on myself; how I've been a fan and collector of, and have been doing research on Bing Crosby for twenty-five years now, and have been writing for the Crosby publications for close to twenty years. "Which," I said, "may not seem like a long time, but at thirty-four years of age, it's about two-thirds of my lifetime." "Oh my goodness," came their surprised reaction, followed by another question for me from Kathy, "how did you get interested in Bing Crosby?" After explaining it began at age nine with an interest in antique radios and vintage radio broadcasts, I elicited more incredulous exclamations of "isn't that wonderful!" and "just amazing" from Kathy and Janet respectively.

I was flattered that Kathy and Janet were interested in the ICC and my background, but I knew our scheduled twenty-minute interview time was quickly passing by, so I eased the conversation back to the Lennons and their current projects. Most notably, the introduction of *Best Pals*, a line of dolls created from original dolls Kathy and Janet had as children. Janet responded, "When I was three years old and Janet was six years old, our mom and grandmother made us these darling little sixteen-inch rag dolls. Kathy and I always called each other best pals growing up, so we had these dolls and we carried them everywhere with us. Even when we got a little older we carried them with us on the road. It was like taking a little bit of home with us."

Kathy added, "A few years ago, Janet and I actually decided to record our favorite childhood songs. Songs that were sung to us by our parents and grandparents and older sisters Dee Dee and Peggy, and we called the album *Best Pals*, because they were the songs that we used to sing as we sat side by side in our little red-rockers, and sang to our rag dolls. Then we decided to recreate the actual rag dolls themselves, right down to their vintage clothing. We felt there was a little hole in the toy industry for these kind of dolls; there's always room for the 'trendies' and 'technos', but our dolls kind of bring people back to a simpler time, and we felt it was time for little girls to maybe want to stay little a little bit longer. They're soft, and all the clothes can be changed. They're very old-fashioned, and we're really excited about doing this after celebrating our fiftieth anniversary as being Lennon Sisters, even though we're still performing as Lennon Sisters."

I queried if these dolls can be purchased in retail outlets or strictly online, and Janet replied, "If people want to go to our website, which is www.bestpals.net ,

they will see a list of retail stores where they can find them. They can also be purchased here at the Welk resort in Branson (Missouri), or through the website online." Kathy added, "You can also go in to our website, which is www.lennonsisters.com , where there's a link to the *Best Pals* website, and get information on us, hear us sing, see our products, and see the little dolls. We're very happy and we're getting such a wonderful response for our dolls."

Kathy & Janet pictured with the dolls.

The Lennon Sisters publicist Elliott Chang sent me a copy of their latest album *Best Pals*, and I mentioned how much I enjoyed their rendition of Bing's classic 'Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral'. Kathy said, "People love that; we sing that very often, and you just watch people lip-synch, or you see tears in their eyes, that makes it very special. Well good, I'm glad you liked it!" I mentioned a few other songs on the album that Bing had some success with, like 'Little Lady Make Believe', which Bing recorded in 1938 (Janet said, "Did he really? We didn't know that"), and 'Kentucky Babe', which was the flip side to his 1947 million-selling record of 'The Whiffenpoof Song'. Janet added, "Wow, you're a walking encyclopedia of Bing Crosby and you know what, that is really good because when we do our concerts and shows where we talk about our dolls and sing to children, it's very nice to have background like that to say and tell, so that's good for us to know."

While on the subject of Bing Crosby, I decided now would be a good time to talk about Bing and the Lennon Sisters' work with him. I mentioned the research that I did, along with Malcolm Macfarlane and the late Lionel Pairpoint, on Bing's television career, and said incredible as it may seem, the only time the Lennon Sisters appeared on TV with Bing Crosby was on the December 21, 1968 episode of *The Hollywood Palace*. Janet quickly added, "That was the only TV appearance we made with him. We did several recordings with him, one was for charity and then some were for the Catholic Church." Kathy chimed in, "Yes we did one for, and I think you had that, of us with Bing called 'Christmas Party' (I had sent Kathy and Janet a DVD of the Palace show, along with a CD of 'Christmas Party', a little seven-inch 33 1/3 rpm record Bing and The Lennon Sisters did as a promotion for *Country Beautiful* magazine), and it was through a Father Ramaker, and that's how we found out about it, and he became friends with a man named Judge Carberry. Judge knew Bing, and he knew a lot of the celebrities, and he would bring them in to help with the Catholic charities, and that's one thing that we did."

Adding more fascinating hereto-unknown details of Bing's charitable recordings, Kathy said, "Then we did another, and there was an album for the US Treasury. Then we did something for the Catholic Church for Father Peyton, and they were little, small 45's, but they could've been actually 78's inside a 45rpm-sized cardboard album, and they would say on the label 'Prayers and Songs'. We did them with Jane Wyatt and Bing Crosby, and Janet did some special ones on St. Bernadette and a couple of the other Catholic Saints. Our brothers Dan and Pat did one with Bing Crosby and with Jane Wyatt, and then the four of us did one. They were for the Catholic Press. I actually could look that up for you, and if I find it I'll send that on to you." I enthusiastically replied, "I would appreciate that, that's something for me to search for." Janet said, "I think we have them somewhere here in our archives," to which Kathy added, "I know I have the picture, I do have a picture of Jane Wyatt and Bing Crosby and our brothers sitting at the recording studio, so you know what, let me look that up" (she writes herself a note "Bing picture and Saint series"). I added, "That would be great to include with the article I'm putting together," and Kathy said, "If they are where I think they are I know right where to get them!"

Back to the Hollywood Palace Christmas show. I said, "Without asking the obvious cliché what was it like to work with Bing Crosby, let me preface that by saying what was your reaction when you got the word that you would be starring with Bing Crosby in one of the highest rated TV shows of the year, the Bing Crosby Family Christmas Show?" Janet said, "We were really honored, you know we had such a thing for Bing Crosby because he looked just like our dad!" Kathy added, "He still does, we were just looking this morning on one of the DVD's, and he just reminded us of our dad. He was built like him, he had the same facial structure, and that little sense of humor that was a little bit dry, and that Irish twinkle in his eye. Very much like daddy."

"And, of course, just the name Bing Crosby, you know, it was like 'oh my gosh, this is going to be special!' We'd done so many family Christmas specials, and that's what Christmas is always been about, the wonderful shows; the Andy Williams, the Osmond Brothers, the Lennon Sisters, the Lennon family, the Welk family, you know that's when you saw all of those

wonderful specials that they really don't have today, which is VERY sad. But to do a 'Bing Crosby' with the family, and of course, to have John Byner, whom we had worked with quite a few times and he is SO much fun, and Glen Campbell, who is such a dear friend. Glen is about our age, so we were young together and performing young together. It was great to do a duet with him, and then to sing with Kathryn Crosby, who we had known more as this beautiful actress, and had seen in movies when we were young. She was still that same pretty, elegant person, and their little daughter, Mary Frances, was exactly like her mother. To this day when you see her acting, she's just so much like her mother it's just shocking." Janet said, "We were all sort've in awe, I know Glen Campbell and the four of us were just in awe that we were actually working with Bing Crosby."

I told Janet that I had the opportunity to meet Glen Campbell in July 2005, and was able to give him a copy of the 1968 Hollywood Palace Christmas show on DVD as well. He was thrilled to have a copy, mentioning to a reporter during the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am the following February that it is among his most prized possessions. Kathy said, "That's wonderful, because when we were watching it, and we just kept re-looking at it, we said 'Oh I wonder if Glen has one of these, we'll have to make him a copy', so that's great he has one!" I jokingly said 'the only cast member I haven't gotten a copy to yet is John Byner,' to which Janet said "Oh! He was just here (in Branson) a couple of months ago!"

My next question was if the Lennons had followed Bing's career while they were growing up. "Oh yes, of course!" came their reply in unison. Janet said, "We saw his movies, and his movies with Bob Hope. We were big movie buffs, and of course heard him on the radio." Kathy added, "It (the movies) was where the family could see those shows; if you knew Bing Crosby was in it, you could go see it. He was such a wonderful dramatic actor, and I don't think a lot of people think of him as being that way. He was just sensational. And you know watching him now, appreciating him, watching him on Turner Classic Movies or AMC, you say 'Wow! He really could do it all!' you know. Not just in the funny comedies with Bob Hope, there were those with wonderful, deep, heavy acting that he did a great job." I suggested that a lot of young people are discovering Bing, thanks to the TCM channel, and are enjoying the 'Road' pictures, or things like *Robin & The 7 Hoods* for the first time. Janet added, "That channel is a wonderful thing for young people because, boy, what do they have to compare it with now, 'American Pie' or something, there's just nothing like those old movies."

Kathy added, "And also, just for your information, Janet just sparked something, we did so many variety shows, we guest-starred on just about every variety show that was there (on television), and we did 'Perry Como' very often, but one of our favorite Perry Como shows we ever did, we did with the Crosby Brothers! You ought to look for that, because it's just incredible. Nancy Sinatra was on it, and Tommy Sands. We did a medley with them, not Gary, but it was Phil, Dennis and Lindsay. And we did 'I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Pretty Baby' (Kathy and Janet sang this as a duet over the phone for me!), and we ended up actually telling them we loved it so much that we learned that medley and the Lennon Sisters did it on the road!"

I said, "It's a coincidence that you mention Perry Como, because my Co-Editor for *BING* magazine, Malcolm Macfarlane, is researching a book on Perry, covering his life day-by-day, and it's really going to be an intense study on Perry. Malcolm sent me a list of about seven or eight of Perry's TV shows that the Lennon Sisters guest-starred on over the years, and I can tell you that the show you mentioned was Perry's Kraft Music Hall show that aired on NBC November 23, 1960." Kathy said, "Oh, you know what, if you EVER get any copies of those, we don't have any." I said, "I'll see what I can do for you, they might be floating around somewhere," to which they replied in unison "That would be so wonderful," and Kathy mentioned another Como show they were on with Dorothy Collins (April 13, 1960), Bobby Vinton (November 22, 1965), and so many, we would love, and we did 'Perry' so often, I mean, we could tell the man who's writing the book wonderful stories being with Perry. He was so precious. And then when our father was killed, Perry was one of the very first one's to call and say 'what can 'Ros (Perry's wife Roselle) and I do, can we come out, what can we do for the children'. We had our own (TV) show at that time with Jimmy Durante, and Perry was one of our very first guests after we came back to the show after a hiatus after daddy was killed, and Perry was just incredible, and was so good to mom, it just endeared him even more to our hearts."

While on the subject of Perry Como, I brought up the name of my dear friend, the late Nick Perito, who was Perry's music director for the last forty years of his career. The name immediately brought for excited exclamations from the Lennons. "OH WE LOVED NICK PERITO, he was such a good friend of ours." Kathy added, "I know he died just a few years ago... oh what a sweet, sweet man, we loved him, we loved Ray Charles, all of those people we have great, fond memories of being with them."

Getting back to the Hollywood Palace Christmas show, I asked the Lennons if Bing was involved at all in choosing the songs to be performed on the show. The Lennon Sisters performed 'The Christmas Waltz' and 'The Christmas Song' solo, as well as a medley with the cast. Janet said, "I think we probably chose our own songs, I don't know that he was involved in choosing our songs."

Bing and The Lennon Sisters at work on the Hollywood Palace show.

Kathy added, "What they usually do when they have specials like that, they will call and let you know you're on and then say 'we want you to do two songs, why don't you choose those,' and then you find out there's a conflict. If Bing had wanted to do 'The Christmas Song', I'm sure that we would've then probably chosen another one. So I'm sure being the star, and he hosting it, that he had his first choice of songs, and then you go from there. I know the one that we did with Glen Campbell, they wrote for us. I remember them writing the music and teaching it to us."

I mentioned that was the song 'Christmas Eve', which Perry Como had also recorded in 1968. Kathy exclaimed, "That right, absolutely, I do remember that, but we had never known the song, and we learned it right there, and then, of course, when Kathryn had done the one number, they added us to that because it a little 'round', so that was new to us. So the writers kind of lay it out for you and then you fill in where you think you might want to do something, and then they suggest, you know, duets here and there. That's usually how the show runs. I'm sure Bing did exactly what he wanted to do and then they filled in around him."

My next question concerned the song 'White Christmas' on the show. Immediately following Bing's last note of the song, the Lennon Sisters, along with the rest of the cast, joined Bing on stage for a Christmas medley, including 'Caroling, Caroling', 'Do You Hear What I Hear?' and Bing's solo of 'Silent Night'. I asked Kathy and Janet if they remember what was going through their minds as they stood there in the wings, listening to Bing sing the biggest selling record of all time? Janet said, "Pretty surreal, really, when you've grown up listening to that song and knowing that it's probably the most popular song ever recorded. It was pretty surreal to be there, watching him doing it right there." Kathy chimed in and said, "Also, just bringing back the movies, you know, with Rosemary Clooney, it was like 'Wow, we're standing here and the REAL Bing Crosby is singing!"

"Anytime we were on with any of those icons, like Bing Crosby, Jimmy Durante, Perry Como, Bob Hope, Andy Williams, it's very hard for you to realize that you're going to be with them and going to be appearing with them, and they even know your name!! I think for us we'll always be the little girls from Venice, California and we just happened to sing, and so it still was always honoring, it was always for us to be invited and asked, and for them to acknowledge that we are also performers, and so it's a very special memory for us."

Further picking their brains about a single TV show that took place almost forty years ago, I asked if they recalled any amusing or not so amusing things that happened behind the scenes concerning Bing either during rehearsals or during the taping of the show? Kathy immediately recalled, "I know one thing... Bing kept rehearsing with Harry, and he kept saying 'now you gotta think about it a little bit higher; you gotta think of these notes,' and he worked with him a little bit. Then Kathryn Crosby kept working with Mary Frances, and she would say things like, 'OK, now put your head up and smile.' They were very much a 'mom and dad' choreographing what the children were doing, and also Kathryn kept telling Harry, 'now take that guitar and get back there and keep rehearsing on that,' and I remember thinking 'oh my gosh, that's so perfect,' because you want it to be right. The audience is going to be coming in, so I do remember that."

Bing's son Harry had a near mishap with a golf cart he was driving on stage during the taping of the show. He almost drove it off the stage and out into the audience, hitting the brakes at the last minute. The golf cart was a supposed Christmas gift from Jack Benny, while Bing's family gave him 3 new golf balls for a Christmas present. Bing quipped, "The world is changing!" I asked the Lennons if they remembered that incident. Kathy recalled, "That's right, that was funny. Well, what they did, even though the shows were taped, they taped them as they were live. They very seldom stopped the tape because it cost so much money. So, even if there are mishaps, people go on, it was like 'Whoa, did he hit the brakes!' I remember that also. I didn't remember it until I saw the video you sent, and then I started to laugh, I though 'Gosh, I remember that'!"

Janet recalls seeing Bing "going over and always fixing the boys' ties (Harry and Nathaniel)." Kathy added, "I'm sure they weren't used to wearing suits and ties very often, although probably going to their golf club up there they did, but I remember he kept juggling their ties; fixing their ties."

When asked if they remembered the gift the Lennon Sisters gave to Bing on the show, Kathy, somewhat embarrassed, recalled, "Yeah, that was silly, a sweater with four arms." Janet laughingly agreed, adding, "Bing said, 'did you make that for me or the Smothers

Brothers?'" "He was fun to work with," Janet continued, "because, as you know, we came from the really strict upbringing on the Welk show, having to know your lines, and be on your mark and be on time, and do your thing and be prepared, and he came from that school too. So when we would come together to work, we just really did our thing, and we did it so well we hardly ever had to really rehearse. We just did it and it was done. I think he (Bing) was so involved with his family backstage when we were doing the Christmas special (Hollywood Palace show), that he didn't do tons of socializing on that show, because I think he was just involved with the children and with Kathryn."

Bing and The Lennon Sisters with the four-armed sweater.

Being curious about a technical aspect of those Hollywood Palace shows, I asked Kathy and Janet if they could tell me how the musical numbers were pre-recorded, i.e., was there a separate recording studio where the cast would assemble prior to show time and pre-record the songs to lip-synch to? Janet remembered, "No, they had a live orchestra on the side of the stage, sort of partially in the audience. It was all set up, and we would stand near the live orchestra the night before the show usually or the morning of the show, and they put a big boom mike in front of our faces and we would pre-record. It was live with music, so we didn't do a lot of takes, and sort of what you heard was what you got. They didn't like to take a lot of takes."

Thinking our members would be interested to know if either Kathy or Janet posses any Bing Crosby albums or DVD's in their own personal music collections, I posed that question to them next. "Actually, our Dad did," said Kathy. "So, consequently, we have that as a family. We have one of those great big huge books where you turn the book open and there's like six different records in there (a 78rpm album), and we have one of those. Gosh, I can't think of the name of it right now, it has a lot of blue on the front, sort of black and white with blue." I suggested it could be Bing's popular Decca *Merry Christmas* album, and Kathy said, "It could be, I can't remember exactly which one it was, but we have a lot of those of daddy's that were very precious to him and we just kept them kind of as family memorabilia that we love."

My final question pertaining to Bing was one I thought the Lennon Sisters could shed some light on. I asked them if it's true that their dear friend Norma Zimmer, the famous "champagne lady" of the Lawrence Welk TV series, sang on Bing's classic recording of 'White Christmas' as one of the Ken Darby Singers? Kathy immediately chimed in with, "You know what's so funny is as we were watching the DVD (of the Hollywood Palace), again reminding us of what happened at the Palace and all, and then we listened to the 'Christmas Party' CD, I turned to Janet, and what did I say?" Janet answered, "There's Norma! We knew her voice immediately." Kathy continued, "She was one of the top female studio singers in Hollywood for years and years and years, and you will hear her on Bing Crosby's 'White Christmas', on so many of his songs. You can hear her on Nat King Cole, and that's her sound. So yes, absolutely it's true."

I quickly added that Norma Zimmer also appeared in Bing's 1950 Paramount film *Mr. Music*, singing seated next to him during the 'And You'll Be Home' number. Janet excitedly exclaimed, "Oh! I'd love to see that," With Kathy adding, "Alright, Greg, we're going to have to do some swapping here!" I told them I'd be glad to send them a copy, and they both simultaneously said, "That would be super!" Kathy asked me if Norma has a copy, and I said that I haven't been in contact with her, but I'd love to talk to her too sometime. Janet said, "Oh she's still as beautiful as she ever was." Kathy added, "Let me give Norma a call, because she isn't doing a lot of interviews or anything, but, I know she would love to have that for her children and grandchildren. But let me see because, oh, she's just the sweetest person in the whole world!"

Switching gears, I opted to talk a little bit about some of the other legendary performers the Lennon Sisters worked with, starting with Bing's nemesis Bob Hope. While space precludes me from relating their detailed experiences of working with Bob Hope Sammy Davis Jr., Jimmy Durante, Jack Benny, George Burns and, of course, Lawrence Welk, I would be remiss if I didn't include these touching and funny stories about 'ol ski nose.

"Oh gosh," Janet said, "We worked with him so many times through the years. He just had a special place in his heart for us, and us for him, and one of my favorite little mementos I have from him is a card. He sent us flowers one Valentine's Day, and the card reads, 'To Janet: Will you be my Valentine? Love, Bob Hope,' and I just think that's such a special little thing to have.

Kathy recalled, "He came on our show twice with Jimmy Durante, and we did a couple of fun numbers

with him. I was in a scene with him, and I played Dorothy Lamour's part. He was tied up with a rope, and I'm supposed to come and give him a kiss. The director said 'now go over and give him a kiss, because you're seeing him for the very first time, and then untie him.' So I went over and I just kind of reached up and I kissed him on the cheek, and he looked at me and said, 'What are you, a Girl Scout or something? Lay one on me!' Well I died! I mean, first of all I'd never kissed anyone in public, as if I'd kiss Bob Hope on the lips! I was so embarrassed!"

In speaking of Jimmy Durante, I commented that he certainly was a dynamo, with this boundless supply of energy, and he was about seventy-six or seventy-seven at the time of his TV series with the Lennon Sisters. It was sad that he had that major stroke just a short time later that put an end to his performing career. Kathy said, "Yes, when he did get sick, we were very close with his wife Margie also, and his child CeeCee. We went to see him, and we talked to her all the time. It also was a real honor for us to sing 'The Lord's Prayer' at his funeral (in 1980). He meant so much to us."

I recalled my great-grandmother, who was the same age as Lawrence Welk. She never watched television, save for one hour on Saturday night when she'd tune in the Lawrence Welk show. "That's right, isn't it amazing?" said Kathy. "We perform here in Branson, Missouri, we're in our fourteenth season, we'll be performing October 29th through December 7th at the Welk Resort. We're with Larry Gatlin and the Gatlin Brothers, and we have just a fun, wonderful, warm, all harmony-filled Christmas show. But after the shows, we always go in the lobby and we sign autographs and take pictures with people. They come up, and, just as you said, they say, 'Oh, you know, I watched the show with my grandmother, or my great-grandmother, or my parents.' People come to us and say, 'I've thought of you as my grandchildren, or as my daughters.' Now, more and more, they just say we grew up together. They always bring up what they were eating (when watching the Lawrence Welk show), like they always had hot dogs on Saturday night, or hot chocolate with marshmallows, and they always have wonderful stories." I said the fans must always leave you hungry after those meet and greets, which brought forth a big laugh from both Kathy and Janet.

My final question concerned their latest plans. Kathy noted, "We used to perform here in Branson nine months out of the year, now we're just performing six weeks. We might be taking a little more of that (concerts on the road), but that's what people can find out on our website, LennonSisters.com. It pretty much keeps you up to date on what we're doing, specials or shows. We also put together a three-disc anthology package in honor of our fiftieth anniversary of songs the Lennon Sisters have recorded from 1956-2006, along with a beautiful photo album of about forty of our pictures up through the years, which we're very proud of. This can also be purchased on our website. We've reproduced our original paper dolls from the 1960's, and our autobiography is also available. We try to put out a new album every year, and those are available on our website as well. We just keep recreating ourselves!"

"The Lawrence Welk show is still running on PBS, it never did go off of television. They just signed up for two more years. We do a lot of the 'wrap-arounds' and the talking and the video of today for the shows. We taped a little bit about 'we remember when,' and then they air it. Next month, we're going in to tape another series for shows their putting together using old film clips. So we still have shows running every single Saturday night."

In closing, I said, "It's amazing to think that the Lennon Sisters have been in show business for over fifty years. It hardly seems possible, given the fact that neither of you look anywhere near fifty years old!" Kathy summed it up by saying, "Fifty years is a LONG time!" I thanked both Kathy and Janet for being so kind to me and so generous with their time, and added that it's easy to see why America has loved you for fifty years now, and I'm sure will continue to love and support all the good you do and stand for, for another fifty. "Oh, Greg, thank you so much," Kathy and Janet both said, with Kathy promising to look for the photo she mentioned, and the records they made for charity with Bing. I apologized for taking forty-five minutes in what was planned to be a twenty- minute interview, and Janet said "It was interesting for us too, Greg, you asked some good questions." With that, we bid one other a fond farewell.

My thanks go out not only to Kathy and Janet Lennon, but also to their publicist Elliott Chang, who worked patiently with me on making this interview a reality for close to three months. I would also like to thank my good friend David Hendrickson for giving me Elliott's contact information, which made the whole thing possible. If you ever find yourself in Branson, Missouri, be sure to catch the Lennon Sisters performing at the Welk Resort. Beginning with the Boswell Sisters, and continuing on to the Andrews Sisters, Bing Crosby always had a fondness for sibling harmony. You'd be hard-pressed today to find a better example, or a more elegant sound, than you will when listening to the marvelous Lennon Sisters.

Greg Van Beek

The Other Ray Charles

As Greg mentioned during his conversation with the Lennon Sisters, Ken Crossland and your editor are indeed working on a book about Perry Como. Both Ken and I feel that Perry has never had the recognition he deserved and no books have ever been written about

him. We aim to fill that void.

Naturally, we are trying to contact people who worked with Perry and the most vital link so far is with the man who was so important to Perry for nearly 40 years, Ray Charles of the Ray Charles Singers. Ray has been very helpful in answering our diverse queries about Perry Como's long career. He self-deprecatingly now bills himself as "The other Ray Charles" in a humorous tribute to the blues singer with whom he worked on several occasions.

This Ray Charles was born Charles Raymond Offenberg on September 13, 1918 in Chicago. Working in radio, Broadway, and local bands, he got his major break when he landed a job as an arranger for Perry Como's radio backing group in the late 1940s, remaining in that position when Como got a TV program. By the mid-1950s, the group called the Ray Charles Singers replaced the Fontane Sisters as Como's TV backing ensemble. The Ray Charles Singers recorded on their own for Essex, MGM and Decca before hitting their commercial stride on Enoch Light's Command label in the 1960s, with arrangements emphasizing lush instrumentation and soft, breathy singing.

For material, the group favored interpretations of popular standards, also including some Mexican and South American pop and bossa nova songs. "Love Me with All Your Heart," in fact, was a translation of a Mexican song, "Cuando Caliente el Sol," which Charles first heard aboard a cruise ship. Originally the B-side of a cover of "Hello Dolly!" it became an unexpected hit in 1964. The group had several more Top 40 singles that year — "Al-Di-La" and "One More Time" — and hit number 11 with the album *Something Special for Young Lovers*.

After the Ray Charles Singers (who rarely appeared live in concert) passed their prime as a recording act, Charles continued to work in musical direction on TV programs like *Sha Na Na* and *The Muppet Show*. As a songwriter, Charles is best known for the choral anthem "Fifty Nifty United States," in which he set the names of the states to music in alphabetical order. He also wrote some Christmas songs and other special musical material associated with Como such as "If I Could Almost Read Your Mind". Ray Charles has won two Emmy Awards for special musical material, music and lyrics for two comedy specials: *The Funny Side of Marriage* and *The First Nine Months*. At age 88, he lives in Beverly Hills and is still active on the musical scene.

Ray worked with Bing on several occasions. The first time was in 1960 when Bing guested on Perry's show. Ray also produced that excellent Bing Crosby Special in 1968 when Bing, The Supremes and Jose Feliciano sang a wonderful hit tunes medley. He provided special musical material and choral direction for Bing's 1971 Xmas show and the 1977 Pasadena show. Ray says of Bing:

"I found him delightful to work with. Conscientious, witty, pleasant, open to suggestions, extremely musical. Learned immediately. I think his ability to ad lib was because he knew the material he was riffing on. I found him well-read. He was aware of what was happening."

Greg Van Beek tells me that David Hendrickson interviewed Ray Charles on his radio show last year. Dave asked him about the song "Believe Me When I Say You're Looking Great", which Bing and Bob Hope performed on the 1968 RCA special. Ray said he remembered the song and wrote the lyrics. Greg believes Ray also wrote the counter-melody sung by Debbie Reynolds, Martha Raye, Donald O'Connor, et al during Bing's song "Mary Lou" from the 50th anniversary TV special.

For his research on his book about Bing, Gary Giddins spent several hours with Ray and borrowed the scripts of the TV specials.

And another man who has been very helpful to us in respect of Perry Como is:

Buz Kohan

Alan 'Buz' Kohan has been active in the television, music and entertainment industry for over forty years, in the multiple capacities of writer, composer, lyricist, producer, arranger, and creative consultant. He has been head writer for more than 200 television specials and series, including five seasons on the Carol Burnett Show, twenty-eight specials for Perry Como, the Sammy Davis, Jr. series, the Dolly Parton Show, five Bing Crosby specials, five Presidential Inaugural Galas, eight Comic Relief Specials, eighteen Academy Award Oscar Shows, seven People's Choice Awards, seven Emmy Awards, seven Grammy Awards, three Tony Awards, two American Comedy Honors, the Ace Awards, the Country Music Awards, and numerous other award shows and specials. He also wrote and co-produced the Emmy award-winning "Motown 25 Yesterday, Today, Forever" special, the show where Michael Jackson introduced the famous "Moonwalk".

Among the many awards and citations he has received over his career, he is most proud of the thirty-one National Emmy nominations, and thirteen wins from the Television Academy of Arts and Sciences, the second highest individual total of Emmy Awards in Academy history. He has also been nominated for and won awards for the Writers Guild, the George Foster Peabody Award, three Ace Awards, two NAACP Image Awards, and the award from the International Film and Television Film Festival of New York.

As a composer and lyricist, he has written a number of million-selling records for such artists as Michael Jackson, ("Gone Too Soon") Diana Ross, Robert Goulet, and The Ray Charles Singers.

And if this wasn't enough, Mr. Kohan (born 9th

August 1933) is the father of David Kohan, the creator and executive producer of "Will & Grace", his daughter is Jenji Kohan, the writer of the successful "Weeds" comedy series and his other son, Jono (David's twin) is in the music business. His wife, Rhea Kohan is a successful published novelist and for a time was also a TV writer (The Dolly Parton Show) Her novels include "Save Me A Seat" and "Hand Me Downs".

Buz worked on five specials with Bing and found him to be a fascinating man who loved language. He seemed to have led two different lives – the first with Dixie and the 4 boys - the second when married to Kathryn when he had apparently become a more likeable person. Buz recalled how he would write long involved pieces for Bing and that Bing loved the challenge of doing them. He was like a stage mother with his kids on the show. Buz laughed as he remembered Bing's frugality, as he would arrange to have the Christmas decorations from the show sent to his home for use there. The customary presents to the crew were not noted for their generosity either. Buz, you may remember, famously dashed off the "Peace On Earth" segment for the Bing and Bowie duet in 1977, the background to which was more fully described in the Washington Post in December 2006 and reproduced in our last issue.

Buz went on to say, "I think the first show I did with Bing was a special called "Cooling It". The guests were Dean Martin, Bernadette Peters and Flip Wilson. At that time, Flip had his own series where he played different characters, and one of the best known and loved was a saucy, outspoken lady named Geraldine."

Buz had written a sketch for the show featuring Bing and Dean Martin as the last representatives in the world of management and labour respectively with "Geraldine" as the last worker.

"Now, Bing might have known that Flip did a character with a female voice called Geraldine, but he had never seen him in 'Full Drag'. During rehearsals, Flip would just read the copy in that special, salacious voice, and the sketch played very well, getting the proper amount of laughs from the crew, etc.

"Bing thought it was funny, and as you know, he was always great playing a straight man. That evening, we were taping the show, and for the first time, Flip was in full make-up and costume, and he made his entrance as "Geraldine" and sidled over to Bing and Dean to chat. Bing was not looking in that direction but he heard the audience applause on the entrance and managed to look up just as Flip walked towards him. The look on his face was priceless. He had no idea Flip did this character in full drag and full make-up...he thought he just used the female voice to get laughs.

"Bing, trooper that he was, went on with the sketch as written, barely able to suppress his extra amusement at the sight in front of him. When the director yelled, "Cut" there was great applause, and Bing confessed that he had no idea Flip was that "committed" to the character, and it was a real shock to him. If you happen to have access to the tape of "Cooling It", I believe that first take is on there and you can see for yourself, that Bing was not acting surprised...he was genuinely and delightfully shocked."

Bing and Dean break-up as Flip enters the scene.

During my interview with him, I reminded Buz of the hilarious dialogue he had written for the 1977 Pasadena show when Bob Hope presented a "Crummy" to Bing. I had subsequently lifted this for a presentation I had to make to a man I did not particularly like. My efforts were a great success but I had to confess that I had not credited the original writers on that occasion!

Malcolm Macfarlane

Rancho Santa Fe – The Way We Were

Diane Welch who writes for the San Diego Union-Tribune is Ron Bosley's niece. An article written by her in the paper on April 1st had a nice Bing link, which we now share with you.

North County coastal history has been brightened not only by stars of the silver screen, celebrities who once called the San Dieguito area home, but also by locals whose stories are interwoven into regional history.

Take Jerry Ward, an orphan who was taken in by the St. John family of Solana Beach in the 1920s. Once settled with his new family, Ward learned to ride horses

at the Wilson ranch, just east of where Eden Gardens is now, and attended Central School, which still stands on North Rios Avenue and now houses the Solana Beach School District offices.

With the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, Ward, who was 16, had to find work when the St. Johns no longer could support him.

"I couldn't go back to the orphanage because I was too old, so I got a job at the Conley Dairy," Ward said in a recent interview.

Conley's was located where the San Diego Polo Club now stands on El Camino Real in Rancho Santa Fe. Along with the use of a basic shack equipped with a bed, a kerosene lamp and a small hot ring, Ward earned $30 a month milking 15 cows twice a day. Having to work meant skipping school, but Ward eventually graduated from Oceanside High School in 1936. Ward was one of the first to own a surfboard, he proudly said.

"I made it in class," he said. "It was 12 (feet) long and had 400 brass screws in it. It worked good, but you almost had to go in straight because there were no fins."

The beach was a source of recreation and sport for Ward, who became a strong surfer and swimmer. In 1940, after graduating from Oceanside Junior College, Ward was hired through the Works Project Administration program as a lifeguard at Fletcher Cove in Solana Beach.

There was no lifeguard station or lookout tower.

"I just sat on the beach, with my metal lifesaving can by my side and played volleyball," Ward said. "There was only one major incident during my two-year stint, a fellow died, but it was from a heart attack."

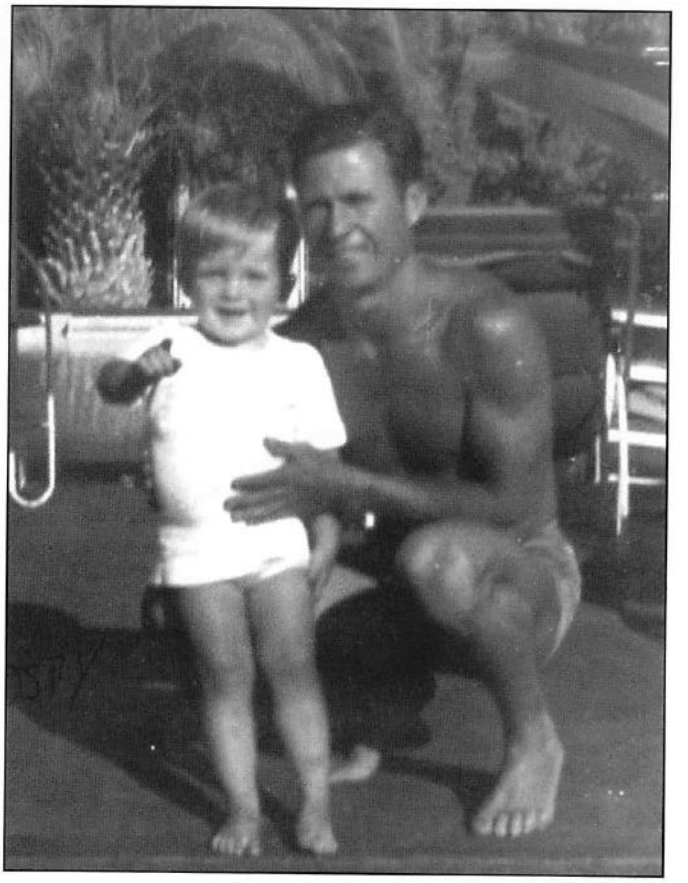
Organizing children's softball games on the diamond across from Fletcher Cove, Ward was like a magnet for children, he said.

"I could get down to their level and that wasn't hard to do," he quipped.

Life took a turn when actor **Bing Crosby**, who spent summers on his Rancho Santa Fe estate, sent one of his press agents to inquire about hiring a local boy to supervise his sons: Gary, Lindsay and twins Phillip and Dennis. A judge who had his office in the Solana Beach Hotel recommended Ward for the job. An interview was set up and Ward was hired by Crosby and paid $6 a day to teach swimming and horseback riding to the four boys.

Ward remembers well those years with the Crosby family. Later accounts by Gary Crosby painted his father as ruthless and cruel, but Ward saw things differently.

"Mr. Crosby was strict because he didn't want his sons to be spoiled, but I never once saw him abusing them," Ward said.



Jerry Ward taught swimming and horseback riding to Bing Crosby's four boys, including Lindsay, seen here with Ward at the actor's home in 1940.

Bing Crosby helped Ward start a newspaper delivery business.

"He loaned me $500 so that I could buy a car and purchase the route," Ward said.

Ward drove about 100 miles a day delivering the *Los Angeles Examiner*. Bill Arballo helped by delivering Ward's papers in Del Mar. When Ward entered the Navy during World War II, he still owed $350 to Crosby, who by then was the nation's top recording star. Hoping that perhaps the loan would be forgiven, Ward nevertheless sent his final payment to Crosby, who subsequently cashed the check.

Ward, whose wife of more than 50 years, Lil, died in 1997, will turn 94 this fall. He lives in Murrieta, and he still swing dances and jitterbugs to Dixieland jazz with his 80-year-old dance partner, Doris. He has five grown sons who live close by, several grandchildren and some wonderful memories.

Diane Welch

TRADING POST

Entries are free for all items of Crosbyana and there is a nominal charge of $3 or £2 for non-Crosby advertisements. All items are printed in good faith and we cannot accept responsibility for any dissatisfaction arising from the transaction as a result of these entries
Please send all advertisements to the Editor

Gord Atkinson, 14 Castle Harbour Crt., Ottawa, ON K2S 1B9, Canada.

Gord's *The Crosby Years* series remains available direct from him. US members can obtain the CDs for $16.00 US each which includes postage. Canadian purchasers should pay CAN $18.00 for each CD. Payment can be made by check or money order to Gord Atkinson. Please note that USA members may send US dollar checks.

UK, Irish and European members who wish to obtain the CDs should contact Malcolm Macfarlane. The CDs cost £10 each.

Charlie Campbell, 49 Loraine Rd., Dundee DD4 7DX, UK

Charlie wishes to swap unusual radio items of Bing. Please contact for list.

Michael Crampton, address on inside front cover.

Michael has many spare copies of old issues of BING magazine and please contact him if you would like to pick some up for a nominal price. Also, there are still some copies left of the excellent book covering Bing's TV appearances.

Festival Films, 6115 Chestnut Terrace, Shorewood, MN 55331, USA (Tel. & Fax: (952) 470-2172, e-mail: Fesfilms@aol.com)

Ron Hall at Festival Films can meet all your requirements for Bing on DVD and video. See also www.FesFilms.com

John Jolley, 28 Bulbery, Abbotts Ann, Andover, Hants SP11 7BN, UK (Tel: 01264 710433, mobile: 07969 939298)

John has the Bing's Hollywood set on LPs (Brunswick BING 1-15) and is looking to dispose of them. Offers to John please.

Malcolm Macfarlane, address on inside front cover.

Gerard Ormesher has to dispose of his Bing collection, much of which came from the late Arthur Smith, and he is happy for anyone who wants it to have it free of charge. I have picked up the collection from Gerard and briefly it comprises 62 CDs, 51 LPs, 41 cassettes, 8 books (including the rare Fred Reynolds Crosby Collection volumes) and seven old Bing calendars from various years. Please contact me if you would like to collect these items from my home. A donation to the ICC might be nice.

Colin McLean, (mobile +44 (0) 7711 812237, Tel. +44 (0) 1561 320481, email: candcmclean@hotmail.com)

"As discussed earlier my late father's collection may be of interest to some of your members. In very broad terms there are approximately: 80 LP's including boxed sets all pretty good condition, 30 78's, 170 CD's (again including quite a number of boxed sets), 150 cassettes (many being radio shows sourced from USA). In addition there are a number of books, discographies and videos. My mum has a detailed computer record of individual tracks extending to over 6000 but I can't access it just now. The collection is currently in the Derby area in the UK but will be moved north at the end of June when my mum moves house. If anyone is interested, please contact me."

Gil McKee, 16 Windsor Gardens, Bangor, Co, Down, Northern Ireland BT20 3DD, UK

WANTED – LPs or CDs of Bob Manning, Anne Shelton and Joan Regan.

Dick Powell 78s – Decca F3772, F5503, F6194, F5596, F5549 and F6293 + Brunswick 6667

The Record Centre, 43, Presthope Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 4NJ, UK (Tel: 0121-476-9619, e-mail: Raypurslow@blueyonder.co.uk)

Mail Order only. Ray Purslow and his team are real supporters of the Crosby cause and for your Bing CDs (and LPs) contact Ray.

Redmond Nostalgia Company, P O Box 82, Redmond, WA 98073-0082, USA. (Tel: (425) 774-1819, Fax (425) 774-8076, web site: http://www.redmondnostalgia.com/

e-mail: redmondnostalgia@aol.com)

David Kiner offers a comprehensive list of 361 Bing Crosby CDs. Each CD is one hour long containing two 30 minute radio programs, unless otherwise noted. All programs have been professionally re-mastered for excellent sound quality. All CDs are professionally printed and come sealed in cases with printed inserts.

See the company's web site for details of what is available.

Michael Schnurr, 22449 Lake Road, #110, Rocky River, Ohio 44116, U.S.A. (email: mbschnurr@cox.net)

Bing Crosby on the BOB HOPE SHOW on DVD. More than 150 Bob Hope Shows available on DVD with guests such as Bing, Frank Sinatra, John Wayne, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., Dinah Shore, Andy Williams and many, many more stars from music, TV & film. (Region 0 DVD, playable worldwide.) $15 plus postage each.

The Talking Book Store, Germany (http://www.talking-book-store.com/title.aspx?titleId=5887)

Downloads of the audio version of Gary Giddins' superb book "Bing Crosby – A Pocketful of Dreams" as read by Edward Lewis are available for $43.95. You get the whole 23 hours unabridged.

Worlds Records, P. O. Box 1922, Novato CA 94947, USA (phone: 1-800-742-6663) http://www.worldsrecords.com/

Try this company for imported CDs from the UK and elsewhere.

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Crosby Clubs Around The World

The ICC is pleased to be associated with the following Crosby organisations.

Bing's Friends And Collectors Society,

Hobie and Cathie Wilson, 426 Park Place Drive, Petaluma, California 94954-6647, USA (tel. [707] 762-5570 - e-mail bingsfriends81@sbcglobal.net - website: www.geocities.com/one_sonoma_rose/BingsHomePage.html

The Australian Bing Crosby Club (formerly The Victorian Bing Crosby Society)

Bob Neate, 22 Pakenham St., Blackburn, Victoria, Australia 3130. (tel. [03] 9877 1983)

Internet sites:

Bing Crosby Internet Museum:

www.mcckc.edu/~crosby

A wonderful site which carries up-to-date news and has a lively discussion board. Not to be missed by those on the net.

The Immortal Talents of Bing Crosby

http://www.geocities.com/crissi_n/bing.html

This is a most impressive web site maintained by our member, Crissi Newton. Well worth a look.

www.BingCrosby.com

The site was still being developed by the Crosby family under the Bing Crosby Enterprises banner when last checked.

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OTHER APPRECIATION SOCIETIES

We have reciprocal arrangements with the following clubs and societies for publicity purposes. They kindly advertise our club in their magazines and we are very pleased to return the favour.

In Tune International, Flat 9, Milchester House, 12 Staveley Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN20 7JX, UK, (Tel/Fax: +44 (0) 1323 412698

e-mail: gerry@stonestreet13.freeserve.co.uk,

website: www.GnuDawn.co.uk/intune) Described as the magazine for lovers of the golden age of popular music, this excellent periodical contains 40 pages about nostalgic and easy listening music. Subscriptions, which cover six issues, are £18 for the UK, £22 for Europe and £32.50 for the rest of the world. Payment can be made by credit card.

Memory Lane, P. O. Box 1939, Leigh-on-Sea, SS9 3UH, England. (www.memorylane.org.uk

e-mail: mail@memorylane.org.uk)

Memory Lane is a lively magazine specialising in music of the 1920s through to the 1950s. Although the emphasis is placed on British dance bands and vocalists of the 1930s and 1940s, *Memory Lane* also covers the American scene, jazz, big bands, personalities, music hall and variety artistes. Regular features on Al Bowlly - one of Britain's favourite vocalists. Published quarterly and attractively printed and presented, each edition includes exclusive articles by a team of world-class writers and journalists plus Picture Pages, CD and Cassette reviews, Readers letters, discographical features and the advertisements that you will want to read. A *"must"* for 78 RPM collectors. 3 First Class stamps (or 3 IRCs) will bring a sample copy and full details.

Vintage Record Mart, 'Sarsden', Lower Common, Aylburton, Nr. Lydney, Gloucestershire GL15 6DR, UK

This is a 32 page quarterly trading magazine for collectors of 78s. Annual subscriptions are UK £8, Europe £10.40, USA & Canada £12.20, Australia and New Zealand £12.80.

International Tony Bennett Appreciation Society, c/o Mark Fox, 15 Kilpin Hill Lane, Staincliffe, West Yorkshire, WF13 4BG, UK (phone: 01924 401909, e-mail: markfoxtbas@hotmail.com).

The Doris Day Society, 31 Kirkfield Rise, Ambleside, Cumbria LA22 9DX, UK

The Deanna Durbin Society, c/o Denis Holland, 84A Wolverhampton Rd., Stafford ST17 4AW, UK (phone: 01785 213987).

Dick Haymes Society, c/o Roger L. Dooner, 2951 Tyler St., NE Minneapolis, MN 55418, USA, or Maurice Dunn, 16 Cradley Park Road, Netherton, Dudley West Midlands, DY2 9SR, UK

(web site: http://www.dickhaymes.com/dhsociety/index.html)

International Al Jolson Society, c/o John Wehrman, 1195 Hickory Hill Drive, Green Bay, WI 54304, USA (e-mail: JWWehrman@aol.com - web site: http://www.jolson.org/ - see also http://www.mikescaife.btinternet.co.uk/ for Mike Scaife's Scottish branch website)

Frankie Laine International Appreciation Society, c/o Tony Cooper, 18 Napier Crescent, Seamer, Scarborough, North Yorkshire YO12 4HY, UK (phone / fax 01723 863022 - email: tony@flias.com , website: http://homepages.tesco.net/flias/)

Sinatra Music Society - Mrs Pat Harvey, National Secretary, 11 Mossbank Avenue, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 4UN, UK (tel: 01543-317743,
website: www.sinatra-ms.com/Sinatra.html)

Sinatra Music Society, Dublin Branch, c/o Chris Hitchcock, 21 Roselawn Walk, Dublin 15, Ireland (phone: 01 8212418)

International Andy Williams Appreciation Society, P. O. Box 5, Westerham, Kent TN16 1UE, UK

The club has been running since 1967 and membership costs £6.50 (UK), £7.50 (Europe) and $15 (USA). A quarterly newsletter is issued.

Books 'n' Bing

Going My Way: Bing Crosby and American Culture

Edited by Ruth Prigozy and Walter Raubicheck. To be published by the University of Rochester Press on November 1. ISBN-10: 1580462618. ISBN-13: 978-1580462617. Hardcover, $39.95

We mentioned this in our last issue and we can now list the contents.

Preface—*Michael Feinstein*
Introductory remarks—*Ruth Prigozy, Walter Raubicheck*
Introduction to Bing Crosby—Bing Crosby: Nothing is What

It Seems. *Gary Giddins*
Personal perspectives—Comments *by Kathryn Crosby, Steven C. Crosby, Ken Barnes*

Part One: Theoretical Perspectives on Crosby
1. Analogies of Innocence in *Going My Way*. *David E. White*
2. *Going My Way*: Bing Crosby and the Image of American Catholicism. *Eric Mazur*
3. Bing in Blackface: The Minstrel Tradition of Bing Crosby's Musical and Cinematic Career. *Kathryn T. Nicolson*
4. Saint Bing: Apatheia, Masculine Desire and the Films of Bing Crosby. *Elaine Anderson Phillips*
5. *The Country Girl:* Bing as the Alcoholic. *Linda A. Robinson*

Part Two: Cultural Perspectives on Crosby
6. Bing Crosby: Rock and Roll Godfather. *John Mark Dempsey*
7. American Archetypes: How Crosby and Hope Became Hollywood's Greatest Comedy Team *Walter Raubicheck*
8. Crosby at Paramount: From Crooner to Actor. *Bernard F. Dick*
9. Bing Crosby, Walt Disney, and Ichabod Crane. *M. Thomas Inge*
10. Two Song and Dance Men: Bing and Fred. *Jeanne A. Fuchs*
11. Rivalries: The Mutual Mentoring of Bing Crosby and Frank Sinatra. *Samuel L. Chell*
12. From Crooner to American Icon: Caricatures of Bing Crosby in American Cartoons from the 1930s to the 1950s. *Stephen C. Shafer*

Part Three: Historical Perspectives on Crosby
13. Not Just 'The Crooner': Bing Crosby's Research and 14. Business Enterprises in World War II. *Deborah Dolan*
14. Bing's Entertainment and War Bond Sales Activities During World War II. *Malcolm Macfarlane*
15. Bing Crosby's Magnetic Tape Revolution. *Martin McQuade* and *Pete Hammar*
16. The Bing Crosby Fan Clubs. *F. B. Wiggins*

Conclusion— Bing Crosby: Architect of Twentieth-Century Style. *Will Friedwald*
Bibliography, List of Contributors , Index

It should be quite a book! It would make a nice Christmas present.

Keeping Bing's Memory Alive!

Carolyn Schneider is still very active in promoting her uncle Bing and she sends us a progress report.

Since my last article for BING magazine, I have been kept busy reminding people as best I can, of what a great entertainer uncle Bing was. He has been gone for so many years, much of the media consider him to be totally forgotten and of no interest. Coaxing a newspaper, TV or radio station to play his music or show his films, is a good trick. Because I live in Las Vegas it is especially difficult. People here, for the most part, are Elvis fans or have fond memories of Sinatra and "The Rat Pack", Bing is not a household name. Therefore when I do a book signing, in this area and give a presentation of the Uncle Bing that I knew, I emphasize his connection to the state of Nevada. Many times my audience isn't aware of the cattle ranches he owned, or the fact that he was honorary mayor of the city of Elko.

So far this year I've been very fortunate in having two stories regarding Bing published in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, southern Nevada's largest newspaper with a circulation of 200,000 plus. A popular and widely read columnist, Norm Clarke, became interested in my book when I spoke to him at a luncheon. The result was a wonderful article with an eye catching title: "Kindness of Uncle Bing Noted in Book". Norm wrote a second article, which appeared, aptly enough, on May 3rd regarding a bit of Las Vegas history that I told him about. It concerned a time capsule that was buried on the grounds of the Sands Hotel and Casino here back in 1953. The items that were placed inside the capsule included one of Uncle Bing's pipes. During a construction project in the 1970's the capsule was unearthed and more memorabilia was added before being re-buried. In 1996 the Sands was imploded and the very grand Venetian hotel and casino was built in its place. I have made a number of inquiries, but no one seems to know if the capsule was found and removed at this time. So far the mystery remains.

Several months ago I sent a copy of a photo to Phyllis McGuire (see the Bing '07 calendar for December) asking her if she had any other photos with Bing. Miss McGuire lives in Las Vegas and the picture was taken at the Desert Inn golf course around 1957. I had not yet received a reply when I happened to meet her at the Nevada Woman luncheon. I queried her about the photos and she said her secretary would contact me. Also at that event I met Carolyn Goodman, wife of our Mayor Oscar Goodman; she asked for a copy of my book and said that she has always loved Bing.

I have made two trips to California as of this writing. The first was to attend The Hollywood Collectors Show where I had a display set up to sell my book. One of the stars, who were there signing autographs of her photos, was Jane Russell. I introduced myself and asked her about making *Road to Bali*. She was very warm and friendly and kept some of her fans waiting, when she described for me in great detail a particular scene at the end of the film where she took Bing's arm, not Bob Hope's to walk away.

Also in attendance was Connie Stevens, who worked with uncle Bing on a couple of TV specials. I spoke to her, she was very nice, and said she loved working with Bing. "When the boys were on the set with him we had a lot of fun, clowning around between takes," she said.

There were about 50 vendors at that show, selling posters, photos, autographs, lobby cards, CD's, etc. The vendor set up behind me was Yvonne De Carlo's son, selling photos of his mother. A handsome, dark haired young man, he is testing for some movie roles.

Lastly, I was drawn to a seller's booth who was offering a large framed collage about uncle Bing. In it was the Christmas album cover with uncle Bing in a Santa hat, a contract for Bing to appear on Lux Radio Theater and a cancelled check for payment for services rendered, made out to Everett as Bing's agent. The asking price for this piece of memorabilia was $1,500.00 but the vendor said I could have it for $1,200.00 because I was family.

I questioned him about the Bing Crosby signature on the Lux contract. He of course assured me that it was authentic, but I had my doubts. A Bing fan and collector for many years, Hobie Wilson, was attending the show with me and I asked him to look at the signature to verify it. His opinion, as well as mine, was that it was not Bing's. Once again, "buyers beware."

My second visit to California was at the request of the BBC who are doing a six part radio series of uncle Bing. Barbra Paskin and Michael Freedland, the British radio people, asked me to meet them at 594 Mapleton Drive to do an interview. It was certainly "old haunts re-visited" for me; I had not been back there in many years. If you recall that address, it holds a multitude of memories for both Uncle Bing and myself.

This has been a chronicle of my adventures to date. I have another book signing coming up and a radio interview on a station in Tulsa, Oklahoma that reaches into Texas and Arkansas.

Because I have not been a Crosby collector over the many years of his career, I do not have information regarding his early films or recording dates or statistics that might be of interest. I can only share my personal memories. Otherwise, I deal with the present and future of promoting uncle Bing's legacy. I hope you enjoy my reports and feel that I am doing something worthwhile.

Stay tuned,

Carolyn Schneider

(Editor: Well, I am sure that I speak for all members when I say that we are certainly grateful for everything Carolyn does to keep Bing's name alive. I was delighted to receive a copy of a certificate given to Carolyn by the Hadassah Organization acknowledging with special gratitude "her wonderful insights and discussions about her life with Bing Crosby." Keep up the good work, Carolyn!)

Metronome

Some months ago, your Editor picked up a copy of *Metronome* magazine from October 1944. Edited by Barry Ulanov (who later wrote a very good book about Bing), it is a 40 page publication with a nice photo of Bing and Dinah Shore on the cover.

The editorial reads as follows:

Der Bingle

You've read by this time of Bing Crosby's broadcasts to Germany, of his careful piecing-together of German words, phonetically, of his name among the Germans, Der Bingle. It is only right that this foremost of American entertainers should be overseas now, entertaining Allied troops, propagandizing the Germans, bringing good humor, warm feeling, the remarkable aura of fellowship which characterizes his personality, to men fighting for their lives. It is only right that at this time we should celebrate the enormous achievement in music, in the movies, among the people of the world, of Harry Lillis Crosby, better known as Bing, and now, perhaps, as Der Bingle.

We originally planned to devote at least twenty pages to the life and times of Crosby, to biography,

discography and photography of Bing; but the restraining hand, the undeniable one, of the War Production Board raised itself and so we offer here all the possible space on Bing Crosby. Paper is scarce; we'd like to say more, to give you more to see, but that is the way of a country at war.

We should like to recommend in particular the words of Johnny Mercer and Jimmy Van Heusen on their friend and colleague. Those songwriting eminents do very well by Bing, explaining some of his magic as a man and an entertainer, and suggesting the legendary stature he has assumed, not only among those who know him only as an actor and singer on the screen, over the air or on records, but among those closest to him as well, friends, mother, father, brothers, wife.

If you have seen *Going My Way,* and if you haven't you must, you know about Bing's heart-warming, entirely convincing portrayal of an American priest. You know that he has stepped far beyond the limited sphere of a singer of popular songs and become, as Will Rogers before him, a part of American life, an astonishingly successful symbol of the good man.

METRONOME reviewers are not overly enthusiastic about Bing's singing; perhaps that will seem paradoxical, when **we** are obviously so devoted to him as an entertainer, as a person, as a representative of popular music. It isn't really a contradiction in terms of judgement. METRONOME'S critical standards for popular singing are based on a jazz esthetic. We think that popular singing has to partake of the feeling and character of an instrumental improvision in jazz. Insofar as Crosby approximates this feeling and character, we praise him; when he doesn't, we don't exactly disparage his efforts, he is never really bad, but we don't enthuse either.

Bing built his career as a singer, a good singer, a singer who helped set styles, who did more than any other ballad singer to make lyrics credible, to raise the standards of ballad writing by leavening those of ballad singing. Today, he is far more than a singer. He is an utterly delightful master of ceremonies, sponsor of fine music, a brilliant acting personality. For all of those things, and his splendid work at home and abroad among servicemen, for the great distinction his every activity gives the whole field of music, we salute Der Bingle.

So, the Editor was not altogether convinced about Bing's singing but he was pretty favourable about the man himself. There follows a long article by Barry Ulanov telling Bing's life story which is packed with photos. However as the facts in the article will be familiar to most readers of BING magazine, they will not be repeated here. The article concludes ....

. . . The articles in this issue by Johnny Mercer and Jimmy Van Heusen give you a good idea of the man's personality. The photographs and lists of films and records make a good summary of the main lines of his colossal career. A few closing words are in order here to fill in the pattern of his life outside the business today.

His closest friends are Burke, Van Heusen, Mercer, Phil Silvers, Lin Howard, Barney Dean (who writes gags for him and for Bob Hope), Hope, Charlie Erb (now in service), Bud Ward (the golfer, now in service), Buddy Morris, Pat O'Brien. These are the names that come readily to mind; Bing is so much admired, loved, and offers his friendship so readily that a complete list of friends would probably take up as much space as all the articles in this issue. Van Heusen, other friends of Bing say, has taken the place of the late Eddie Lang as Bing's confidant. He knows what Bing is thinking and feeling almost instinctively.

He can pick out the squares in any group and guide Bing away from them to his kind of people. Like Bing, he's close-mouthed about himself and his relationship with Crosby, but it's much testified to by associates of both.

Bing is an omnivorous reader, running through most of the current books in his odd moments of free time. In that free time he putters about his ranch, plays a lot of golf, sings. He sings on his way out to the track or the ranch or the golf course, making up words as he goes along. He wakes up friends at 5:30 in the morning at the ranch by singing under their window.

Bing's early career is dotted with references to his sizable alcoholic capacity. There are two clubs, as Johnny Burke puts it, The "I was there the night he fell through the drums" Association and The "I carried him home" Society. Both exaggerate terribly. He drank a good deal, he still drinks, but never, according to friends, loses his poise, never lets that last shell crack the slightest bit.

There is also The Bing Crosby Room-mate Organization, which had, at last count, some 736 members. These guys might have lived on the third floor of the Belvedere Hotel when Bing was ensconced on the seventh—a couple of years pass, fame accrues and they have become Crosby room-mates. Phonies, all.

He despises being thought sentimental, never will admit giving a gift. When he buys somebody a book, for example, he will say it was sent to him, he doesn't want it, how about you, Johnny, think you might like it? As with his religion, he isn't demonstrative about sentiment, about his considerable knowledge of music, all kinds of music, but the feeling and acquaintanceship are there, solidly a part of the man. He will feign ignorance of an opera, then, some days later, whistle all of its principal arias.

Vitally interested in people, in their thoughts and personalities, he follows an incredible number of levels of living, accurately reproducing the argot and atmosphere of these planes in his moments upon them.

His children, Gary, the oldest, the twins, Dennis and Phillip, and Linnie (Lindsay), the youngest, reflect Bing amazingly, delightfully. Gary has the same gravel throat, produces the same sounds as his father, can sing so much like him, they do Crosby duets together. Linnie, reverently referred to as The Genius, is a precocious child with a remarkable memory and a captivating manner.

For these children, for his adoring father and mother, his deeply attached brothers and sisters, and for almost the rest of America, Bing Crosby is *the* great figure in the entertainment world in our time. Every channel of investigation pursued by this writer sustains that impression.

The articles by Jimmy Van Heusen and Johnny Mercer then follow and I assume that they were actually written by the men concerned. They make interesting reading.

BING - Two great songwriters write about a great singer and a great friend.

By Jimmy Van Heusen

One day in September, 1940, the Twentieth-Century pulled out of Grand Central Station with me in the club car wondering about Zanzibar. Two fearful questions confronted me: what was the native music like, and what was Bing Crosby like? I was on my way to Hollywood, signed to write my first score for Bing Crosby. On my lap was a movie script of his next picture called *Road To Zanzibar,* which I had saved reading for the train ride.

Panic had begun to set in, but encouraged by a Dr. Brown's Celery Tonic, I turned to page one. Several hours later half my worries were over. The script had called for no extensive knowledge of Zanzibar—but there were no footnotes on Crosby.

However, I reminded myself that I was to collaborate with Johnny Burke, who had written the lyrics for all the Crosby pictures since 1936. Surely he knew everything there was to know about Bing. A couple of days' conversation and I would be well fortified. And that's exactly what happened when I finally arrived in Hollywood.

Johnny met me at the train and I began immediately. "What sort of a guy is Crosby?"

"You'll meet him," he replied, as though anyone would know what sort of a guy Crosby is in a minute.

Jimmy Van Heusen (left) with Johnny Burke

"I know, but if I have a good understanding of him it will make it so much easier for me."

"I suppose you're right," he said, "But the best way to find out is the way I did. I'll introduce you to his wife, Dixie."

"Good! I'll bring along a note book."

Now, so that I won't forget anything, let me refer to some of the notes I made:

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Dixie—*Well let me see . . . he mixes well . . . He has blue eyes and brown hair. . . . He's the romantic idol of millions of girls . . . sings all the time . . . loves horses . . . plays golf . . . likes to wear old clothes. . . .*

Me—*Please, Mrs. Crosby, I could get all that from a fan magazine.*

Dixie—*That's where I got it: Frankly, I don't know how to describe him. Maybe if you talked to his Dad—at least you would hear some boyhood anecdotes.*

****

Dad—*Always got into trouble. . . . Don't think he ever studied. . . . Used to drive me crazy with the drums . . . still can't play them . . . real boy, though . . . you know, a roughneck.*

Me—*But there must have been a sentimental side to him.*

Dad—*Better ask his mother about that . . . the Crosby men aren't demonstrative.*

****

Mother—*Never got into trouble . . . always studied. . . played the drums beautifully . . . still does . . . real boy, though, . . . you know, a gentleman.*

Me—*How was he in sports?*

Mother—*His brother, Everett, could tell you more about that.*

Me—*May I ask you some questions about Bing? If I had a thorough insight of his character, I feel it would help me to compose the right melodies for him.*

Everett—*Pretty busy. . . . Have to change some contracts . . . Bing's always signing papers without reading them. . . Gets into more damn schemes.... Invests in anything . . . pretty busy. ... See Larry. . . .*

****

Me—*Was Bing good at hunting?*

Larry—*Nope!*

Me—*Why? Did he dislike killing animals?* Larry—*Yep!*

Me—*Does he like fishing?*

Larry—*Yep!*

Me—*But he kills fish. Isn't that the same thing?* Larry—*Nope!*

Me—*Can he swim?*

Larry—*Yep!*

Me—*Can he play tennis?*

Larry—*Yep!*

Me—*Is he really a great golfer?*

Larry—*Yep!*

Me—*Can you tell me about it?*

Larry—*Nope!*

Me—*Who would I have to see about that? His brother Bob?*

Larry—*Yep!*

****

Bob—*I quit golf today. . . . Ask Bob Hope.*

****

Hope—*He kicks his ball out of the rough . . . talks on my back swing . . . sings when I'm putting . . .*

Me—*How do you like his singing?*

Hope—*I guess a lot of people like it. . . . But confidentially, I hear he has no pitch ... takes two months to learn a song . . . no range . . . and can't read a note . . . John Scott Trotter will tell you.*

****

Me—*What's the truth on Bing's voice . . . I heard a rumor . . .*

Trotter—*Write anything you like for him . . . terrific range. . . . But only play it once. . . . He learns so quickly that the second time through he starts improvising . . .*

Me—*About those nodes on his throat?*

Trotter—*Here's Doctor Stevens' address.*

Me—*Doctor, it's very important, for professional reasons that I know about Bing Crosby.*

Doctor—*Have to consult my record. . . . seems normal enough if I remember correctly . . . slight adenoid trouble . . . wouldn't hurt to have them out.*

Me—*How about his spirit, his energy? Just think of running a racing stable and . . .*

Doctor — *Look up Lin Howard, they're partners.*

****

Howard—*I'm getting sick of those cracks on the air . . . we get plenty of winners. . . . Bing should quit making jokes about our horses.*

Me—*Doesn't that mean he has a sense of humor?*

Howard—*I don't know. Ask Barney Dean; he writes gags for him.*

****

Dean—*He uses too many big words: but he gets laughs anyway.*

Me—*Will he listen to advice?*

Dean—*Please believe me, yes. But ask Dave Butler, he's directing the picture.*

****

Butler—*Please believe me, no! Everything happens to me.*

Me—*But you see, I'm writing the music for your picture and I thought if I could, get the inside story about Bing it would—*

Butler—*Why don't you talk to his sons*?

****

Linny—*He's a problem sometimes.*

Denny—*I'd say provocative.*

Phil—*I'm not prepared to make a statement.*

Gary—*I suggest you, question Johnny Burke.*

****

So, back to Burke, completely bewildered. He'd better explain all that happened if he expected a safe and sane collaboration.

"What did you find out?" he asked, very, very nonchalantly.

I tried to collect my thoughts.

"If my calculations are right, there is no such person as Bing Crosby. Or else there are two hundred and seventy-three Bing Crosbys."

"Didn't you have lunch with him today?"

The black dots in front of my eyes started.

"No. I was two minutes late. The waiter seemed to

think I should understand."

"You'd better keep that in mind." Johnny warned, "and he's never two minutes early either."

"Listen," and I grabbed at a nearby straw, "there must be something in him that no one has fathomed yet. Although, I hear he has a close circle of friends about the size of the population of China. Everyone seems to know him intimately. Jockeys can talk about him with great authority. Cowboys can. The Underworld. The Aristocracy. Poets. Peasants. But they all have different versions. Maybe he just has the knack of fitting into the other fellow's picture."

"Maybe."

And I'll be darned if Burke didn't look bewildered.

Of course, that was four years ago. I've been writing for him ever since. That makes eight years that Johnny has been writing for him. You can't be associated with a man that long and not learn something about him. In fact I can assure you, very briefly, that he has brown hair, blue eyes, loves horses, plays golf, is married and has four children, and sings. And I know what I'm talking about. I happen to be one of his millions of close friends.

A very amusing article, but no doubt containing quite a lot of truth. Next came Johnny Mercer.

BING

By Johnny Mercer

I think it was back in 1927, or thereabouts, that I first heard of Bing Crosby. I was back home in Savannah, and I won't ever forget the occasion because I had just bought a Paul Whiteman record of *Ol' Man River* which featured a vocal unlike anything I'd ever heard before. The singer didn't croon as all the other singers did at the time; it seemed to me he employed a completely new and different style which sounded more natural and effortless than any I'd ever heard. I had no idea who Bing Crosby was but I got a terrific bang from his singing. And like millions of others, I still do.

Later I went to New York, and from there to Hollywood to compose an operetta, *Paris in Spring*. I think that was in 1930. One night I went, alone, over to the Ambassador Hotel to catch Gus Arnheim's band and the Arnheim singer. I had never forgotten his name and his work. Somehow I worked my way backstage and there I introduced myself to Harry Lillis Crosby. We chatted a couple of minutes. Even then I considered him the best of the singers of pop tunes, and I especially admired the way he interpreted a lyric. When Bing sang a song he sang it the way the composer intended it to be sung. The same holds true of his singing today.

The next time I came into contact with The Groaner was about 1935. I was writing songs for RKO films and trying to act, too. The pictures were *Old Man Rhythm* and *To Beat the Band*. While working with Whiteman I had become friendly with Matty Malneck, the violinist and arranger who now is a very successful leader here in Hollywood. Malneck took me out to Bing's home in the Valley (the one that was destroyed by fire a year or so ago) and it was then, after all those years, that I got to know the guy well.

Shortly after I wrote some songs for Bing's picture. *Rhythm on the Range*, which had *I'm An Old Cowhand* as one of the Crosby specialties. About the same time Bing and I hooked up to record *Small Fry* and *Gallagher and Shean* for Decca. We've been thrown together quite a bit ever since. For a while we were both active in a wacky "club" a bunch of guys organized known as the Westwood Marching and Chowder Club. Bob Hope, Pat O'Brien, Joe Venuti, Bill Frawley, Doc Sexton and a bunch of other guys took part in it. The idea was strictly for kicks, with the members taking turns putting on corny vaudeville skits, etc. It was fun, and Bing helped make it so.

So much for history. Bing is still to my mind, the greatest artist of them all. He's never been without a sense of humor. And that sense, in 1944, is more penetrating and "sharp" than it ever was. Only a couple of months ago I had Bob Hope as a guest on the Chesterfield program. Hope was working in a film at Sam Goldwyn's studios and for the early (afternoon) broadcast had to appear in costume, with a long beard hanging down off his chin. We were right in the middle of the show, exchanging banter at the mike, when suddenly, out of the wings, Bing came running out with a huge pair of scissors wearing a barber's coat. Neither Hope nor I had any idea that Crosby was present. Anyway, the gag broke up the show. Bob and I howled, forgot the script; the musicians fell out of the chairs, the

audience was hysterical and for a couple of minutes it was plain panic. I wonder what listeners to the show thought.

Only Crosby could pull a gag of that magnitude.

Anyway, to sum up, it's been a privilege and a source of great pleasure for me to have known Bing, and worked with him, and to have shared the fun and friendship which he just naturally extends to everyone with whom he comes in contact. He's not only an artist of Gargantuan stature—he's a great and yet a humble man. I hope his next 50 years are as successful as his years to date have been. And I'm pretty sure they will be. He's that rare species which goes on and on, adding to his popularity all the time. No one I've ever met deserves success and happiness more than Bing.

Overall, this was a fascinating edition of Metronome and it certainly conveys some idea of Bing's impact in those days.

Celluloid Crosby

Dixie (1943) is a 1940s film that is talked of in hushed tones in some quarters. The depiction of a black faced white man portraying a minstrel is politically incorrect in this twenty-first century unless that person happens to be Al Jolson. And who can take offence at Bing's rendition of "Nobody"? Sung in black face - if that's possible - his Philco Radio Time performance was selected by Decca for release as a single in 1955, such was its charm. The song was originally made famous by Bert Williams, a black vaudeville performer from the early years of the twentieth century. Yet gradually films such as *Dixie* are being acknowledged as products of their time. The "Amos 'n' Andy" television shows of the early 1950s are beginning to appear on DVD. Bing was featured in the film *Check and Double Check* in 1930 when Freeeman F. Gosden and Charles J. Correll blacked up to bring their popular radio show characters of Amos and Andy to the big screen. 20th Century-Fox lifted their ban on reissuing their Charlie Chan features last year and allowed the Chinese detective to live again on DVD. They had originally embargoed home videos of the character because a white actor (Warner Oland and later Sidney Toler) portrayed the oriental 'tec.

In the UK double standards applied. The "Black and White Minstrel Show" was axed by the BBC before it had run its course as far as viewing figures were concerned. Channel 4 played several of the Charlie Chans as part of that station's launch programme some twenty odd years ago. Channel 4 was also responsible for screening *Dixie* in the mid-1980s. I had never seen the film on the big screen but knew that at the time of its original release it had received mixed reviews.

The first thing to register strongly on my television introduction to the film was its garish three colour Technicolor process. It provided an initial opportunity for moviegoers of World War II to see Bing in his true colours. *King of Jazz* (1930) had utilised a two colour process and it was almost as if Paramount wanted to compensate for that relatively colour de-saturated print by turning up the red, yellow and blue regulator knobs to eleven for *Dixie*. Technicolor insisted that the licensing of their patented process was regulated and Natalie Kalmus, the wife of the inventor, always had the last word on what was acceptable. The result was that just about every Technicolor release of the 1940s had a chocolate box colour intensity that glorified even the most sombre of scenes.

The filming of *Dixie* commenced at the end of October, 1942. It was in production for about sixteen weeks. This was a long time for a ninety minute feature. One reason that it had a longer than usual shooting schedule was a U.S. government wartime edict. A ceiling was placed on the cost of studio sets in an attempt to conserve raw materials that might be beneficial to the war effort. Most of the Hollywood studios cooperated with each other and several rival sound stages were utilised in order to make maximum use of standing sets. For *Dixie*, Columbia, Goldwyn and Twentieth Century-Fox played host to Bing and co. with the usual Paramount production team of Gordon Jennings, Farciot Edouart and Ray Moyer making sure that the film had an overall consistency as far as style was concerned.

The idea for the film came from Bill Rankin, who was paid $25,000 for his story outline. As usual, the Paramount publicity office issued press releases as soon as *Dixie* was placed on a pre-production shooting schedule. Also, as usual, much was speculation. Fred Astaire was announced to play the part of Mr. Bones, a role that went to Billy de Wolfe. If you believe what she wrote in her autobiography, there was no doubt as to who would play Bing's leading lady. In "My Side of the Road", Dorothy Lamour stated:

> *"Would you do me a favour?" asked Paramount head Y. Frank Freeman. "Bing Crosby is slipping at the box office and since you're in the top ten this year I'd like you to do a film with Bing." Paramount had signed a huge contract with Bing and wanted my help to get him back where he belonged. So I agreed to do 'Dixie'.*

Well, well. For the record, in the year of the film's release, Bing took fourth place in the annual top ten box-office stars listing. Dorothy Lamour was never ranked in that listing.

Dorothy Lamour helps to get Bing back where he belonged.

Another early casting decision was the third billed Marjorie Reynolds. In *Dixie* she played Bing's girl, Jean Mason. It was her fourth Crosby picture and the third one giving her prominent billing following *Holiday Inn* and *Star Spangled Rhythm*, both released in 1942. Before she rose to fame she had a bit part under her first stage name of Marjorie Moore in *College Humor* (1933).

At this time in Bing's film career it was a foregone conclusion that any songs composed for his films would be written by Johnny Burke and James Van Heusen. It comes as a surprise to find that Decca only issued one 78 to tie in with the film. The coupling was "Sunday, Monday or Always" and "If You Please", both recorded in May of 1943. They were typical romantic ballads with Burke's restrained "I love you but I'm not going to say it out loud" lyrics. Bing did sing a couple of other Burke-Van Heusen songs in the film. They were "She's from Missouri" and "A Horse That Knows the Way Back Home". Both are passable if not strong ditties. One Burke and Van Heusen that did not make it in the film's final edit was "Kinda Peculiar Brown". Perhaps it was thought that record buyers would hesitate before asking a sales assistant for a copy by its title. The song was rescued from the cutting room floor and you can hear it for yourself if you have a copy of the Jasmine release JASCD 111/2 "Going Hollywood Volume 3".

Filmgoers enjoyed *Dixie*. The critics didn't. Even the *Los Angeles Evening Herald Express* called it a film with a just about average plot. That daily carried a lot of film advertising and was loathe to be critical of any Hollywood studio product. Indeed, in the following day's edition it carried a paragraph stating: "Although Bing Crosby's *Dixie* got a sound whacking from the critics, its doing good business in most spots." Could the newspaper editor have received a phone call? Even more of a surprise was the review carried by *Variety* the day before the film's premiere. It began, "The weaker the film vehicles, the greater is the impact of the Crosby technique..." It was over forty years after the film was released that I came across a balanced review that recognised the film's merits as well as its shortcomings. For *Time Out*, Tom Milne wrote:

> "Routinely whitewashed biopic of blackface minstrel Daniel Decatur Emmett... A surprisingly attractive film, nevertheless, with the impressive period reconstructions - shot in glowing colours - helping to flesh out a desperately manufactured plot. Above all, it's directed by Sutherland with a care and affection that shows, relying on nostalgic, old-fashioned groupings... Excellent cast, too."

Paramount couldn't have cared less what the critics thought. They had three Bing films in the 1942/3 list of Variety's top money-spinners where *Dixie* accompanied *Road to Morocco* and *Star Spangled Rhythm*. That ranking was probably boosted by a Lux Radio Theatre presentation of the film just before the film went on full release around Christmas, 1943. Bing and Dottie reprised their film roles. By the time of that December 20th broadcast, production was well underway with what would prove to be Paramount's biggest money spinner to date: *Going My Way*. Who knows how much more popular it would have been if Dorothy Lamour had been cast in that one?

Keith Parkinson

THE A-Z OF BING'S MOVIES

SHALL WE GATHER AT THE RIVER

Song. The opening sequence of *Sing You Sinners* (1938) finds the Crosby character attending church with his two brothers, his mother and the girlfriend of his eldest brother. The five of them join the congregation in singing "Shall we Gather at the River", composed by the Reverend Robert Lowry.

SHAVELSON, MELVILLE (1917 -)

Screenwriter, director and producer. Before he co-wrote the screenplay of *Riding High* (1950) with Robert Riskin and Jack Rose, Mel Shavelson had peripheral involvement with Bing on screen. He co-wrote the Bob Hope comedy *The Princess and the Pirate* (1944) and the screenplay for *Hollywood Victory Caravan* (1945). Bing made a gag appearance in the first and sang a song in the second, a short made for the War Activities

Committee. As his career as writer on Hope's radio show blossomed he was given the opportunity to write screenplays for Hope's films. The two most successful were filmed in the 1950s. They were *The Seven Little Foys* (1955) and *Beau James* (1957). He also directed those two. After *The Five Pennies* (1959) his writing/directing failed to result in much that is memorable and in the mid-seventies he turned his experiences into a humorous novel about Hollywood, "Lualda".

SHAYNE, ROBERT [Robert Shaen Dawe] (1900-1992) Actor. When Leslie Halliwell compiled his film guides, he sometimes found it difficult to pinpoint a performer's merits. And so he classified them as "general-purpose actors". Robert Shayne fits such a description. In *Welcome Stranger* (1947) he played Roy Chesley, who was engaged to Trudy Mason (Joan Caulfield). Of course, he was not serious competition when Bing appeared on the scene. He secured a leading role just once. That was in *The Neanderthal Man* (1953). Nothing more needs to be said.

SHE LOVES ME NOT Film. "The hi-de-hi of higher education" was Paramount's tag line to publicise this 1934 Crosby picture. It was Bing's fourth under his contract with Paramount, and his most financially successful to date. His popularity was increasing by the day as filmgoers, radio listeners and record buyers took to America's most popular entertainer of the 1930s. The success of *She Loves Me Not* was enhanced by the healthy disc sales of "Love in Bloom". That song was the sole Leo Robin-Ralph Rainger composition in the film. It received an Academy Award nomination as the year's best song but lost out to "The Continental". Musically the film short-changed audiences going to see and hear Bing sing. He only had another two songs in the picture: "I'm Hummin', I'm Whistlin' I'm Singin'" and "Straight from the Shoulder". And he only sang solo on "I'm Hummin'...", sharing the vocals on the other two with Kitty Carlisle. The part of Paul Newton who Bing played in the film was originally offered to Gary Cooper, who declined because he thought his performance would be overshadowed by that of Kitty Carlisle. But it was Miriam Hopkins who had the stronger screen presence. In a 1972 interview she remembered her experience of working with Bing as follows:

> "Bing Crosby was a doll. I thought I was a dramatic actress, you see. And I wanted to rehearse everything first. And I said, 'Bing, can't we rehearse this show?' He said: 'Sweetie, no. We'd get stale'"

Interest in the film was revived when it was dramatised on Lux Radio Theatre on 8th November, 1937. Bing starred and sang the film's three songs. Paramount remade the film as "True to the Army" in 1942 and sold the rights to Twentieth-Century Fox ten years later who remade it as *How To Be Very, Very Popular* (1955). Not bad mileage for a film which was summarised as "a showgirl murder witness takes refuge in a men's college".

Miriam Hopkins and Bing rehearse their smiles.

SHE REMINDS ME OF YOU Song. A screen first was achieved when the film's leading man sang a love song to a bear whilst brushing its fur. In *We're Not Dressing* (1934), Bing wields the brush as Droopy is serenaded with this Mack Gordon-Harry Revel song especially composed for the film.

SHEEKMAN, ARTHUR (1901-1978) Screenwriter. Sheekman was responsible for the screenplays of *Blue Skies* (1946), *Welcome Stranger* (1947) and *Mr. Music* (1950). These were quite conventional submissions to Paramount compared to the work he had turned in to that studio in the early 1930s when he was providing dialogue for Marx Brothers pictures. In the 1950s he turned his hand to fashioning serious dramatic scripts, the last two films he worked on being *Some Came Running* (1958) and *Ada* (1961). His parallel writing career involved assisting Groucho Marx on several of the comedian's books.

SHELDON, SIDNEY (1917-2007) Screenwriter who tried producing and directing films before realising there was more money to be made by writing popular fiction. His only work on a Crosby film was taking the original story of the 1936 version of *Anything Goes*, stripping it of its plotline apart from the shipboard setting and then writing the screenplay for the 1956 version. He'd had success in writing screenplays for some musical box-office winners including *Easter Parade* (1948) and *Annie Get Your Gun* (1950). Unfortunately *Anything Goes* failed to capture the imagination to the same extent as those M-G-M

triumphs. That studio took him back in 1962 to write the script for *Jumbo* but by then musicals were no longer in vogue and he forsook motion picture studios for publishing houses. A couple of his best sellers, "The Other Side of Midnight" and "Bloodline" were made into Hollywood films allowing Sheldon to receive two payments for one story.

SHE'S FROM MISSOURI Song. Bing sang this Burke-Van Heusen composition in *Dixie* (1943) yet never got around to making a studio recording of it. It forms part of Dan Emmett's minstrel act and Bing sings it from the stage of the fictional Maxwell Theatre in New Orleans.

SHIELDS, ARTHUR (1896-1970) Actor. How come he's listed as Technical Adviser on *Top O' The Morning* (1949)? He's the younger brother of Barry Fitzgerald, that's how come. Why he should be padding the payroll of this third film pairing of Crosby and Fitzgerald is a mystery. He could hold his own against Barry any day of the week. The fact that he was less hammy than his brother can only be a point in his favour. Shields made his Hollywood debut in *The Plough and the Stars* (1937) and was on screen regularly until he bowed out with *The Pigeon That Took Rome* in 1962.

SHINING FUTURE, THE Short film. Made and distributed by Warner Bros. towards the end of World War II, this twenty minute feature was shown in Canadian cinemas in order to coerce patrons into buying that country's Sixth War Loan bonds. By then it was known that victory was in sight for the allied forces. Hence Bing's contribution, Frank Loesser's "The Road to Victory", was timely. Crosby's vocal was used as the title of an edited version of *The Shining Future* when it was shown in the U.S.A. to promote that country's Fifth War Loan.

SHOWDOWN AT ULCER GULCH Promotional short. The "Saturday Evening Post" wanted to boost the magazine's circulation and hired Bing, Bob Hope, a couple of the Marx Brothers and others to appear in this 1958 short. Within ten years the magazine had folded. Thought by many to be a permanent mainstay of American culture the long running title just couldn't compete for advertisers' money with television and the growth of newspaper colour supplements. Its most collectable editions for Crosby collectors were those serialising "Call Me Lucky" in the early 1950s and an issue in the mid-sixties which featured drawings of the cast of *Stagecoach* (1966) by regular Post illustrator Norman Rockwell. It included an excellent portrait of Bing playing the part of Doc Boone in the film.

SIDNEY, GEORGE (1916-2002) Director. Two George Sidneys had minor involvements in Bing's filmography. By far the better known was the one born in 1916 who went on to produce and direct *Pepe* (1960) in which Bing made a guest appearance. Although film musicals were almost a thing of the past by then Sidney tackled a further three before the end of that decade: *Bye Bye Birdie* (1963), *Viva Las Vegas* (1964) and *Half a Sixpence* (1968).

The "other" **George Sidney** (1876-1945) was the stocky character actor featured in *King of Jazz* (1930). Most of his films were made in the silent era.

SIDNEY, SYLVIA [Sophia Kosow] (1910-1999) Actress. She was another Hollywood performer who had a tenuous link with Bing's film career. She was the leading lady in *Confessions of a Co-ed* (1931) which featured Bing and the Rhythm Boys. Four years later she headed the cast list of *Accent on Youth* which was subsequently adapted as a Crosby vehicle and filmed as *Mr. Music* (1950). Her peak years were spent at Paramount. The studio tended to cast her as a female in jeopardy. She commented, "Paramount paid me by the tear."

SIEGEL, SOL C. (1903-1982) Producer. He produced two of Bing's best musicals: *Blue Skies* in 1946 and *High Society* ten years later. He immediately followed up those two productions by less popular Crosby box-office draws. *Welcome Stranger* (1947) followed hot on the heels of *Blue Skies* whilst *Man on Fire* (1957) was a total contrast to *High Society*. But then his career had been built on taking career chances. He had been a reporter on the New York Herald Tribune. He became a sales executive for a record company. He helped form Republic Pictures, the most successful of the Poverty Row studios. Whilst there, he produced several John Wayne and Gene Autry westerns. He then spent the next twenty years working on big budget productions for three major studios: Paramount, 20th Century-Fox and M-G-M. From his early westerns to his last production, *No Way to Treat a Lady* in 1968, all of his films resulted in profitable excursions for whichever studio had the benefit of his skills.

SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT Song. This Franz Gruber composition found its way into *Going My Way* (1944) after Bing had already committed it to wax on three previous occasions. This film opportunity to provide a reprise occurred in a choir practice scene where Bing had the benefit of accompaniment from the Bob Mitchell Boys' Choir. The song became a regular feature of most of Bing's Christmas radio and television shows.

SIMMONS, RICHARD (1913-2003) Actor. Richard Simmons thought he had a strong case when Frank Sinatra was prosecuted for murder in 1964. But *Robin and the 7 Hoods* was a lighthearted film so prosecutor Simmons lost out to Sinatra's Robbo. Simmons had always played on the right side of the law and was best known in later years for starring as Sergeant Preston of the Yukon in that 1950s television series. Before that he set standards for kids to follow by appearing in serials like *King of the Royal Mounted*

(1940) and *King of the Texas Rangers* (1941). Sinatra first employed him when he was cast in *Sergeants 3* the year before his *Robin* experience. He never wanted to shake off his good-guy image and between those two Sinatra works he played in *Lassie's Great Adventure* (1963). His later acting assignments were on television before ill health forced his reluctant retirement.

SINATRA, FRANK (1915-1998) Good singer and excellent actor when he put his mind to it. He was Bing's main rival for the voice of the (20th) century. The two were on radio, television and film together but this entry will restrict itself to those occasions when they were cast in the same big screen movies. The first time they appeared on film together in the same scenes was for *High Society* (1956) when the billing was Crosby, Grace Kelly then Frank Sinatra. Prior to that they had contributed to a couple of wartime shorts which were fund raisers for war bonds. *The Shining Future* (1944) was for Canada's Sixth War Loan whilst *All Star Bond Rally* (1945) was for the U.S.A.'s Seventh War Bond issue. Following *High Society* they both appeared briefly but separately in *Pepe* (1960) and then in *The Road to Hong Kong* (1961) where Sinatra was joined by Dean Martin for a gag at the end of that film. 1964 featured them both in meaty parts as Allen A. Dale (Bing) and Robbo (Sinatra) for *Robin and the 7 Hoods*. Ten years later they made individual contributions as narrators for *That's Entertainment*. The private and public life of Frank Sinatra has been covered by dozens of books but the world still awaits a definitive biography researched to the high standard Gary Giddins awarded Bing.

SING, BING, SING Short. This was the penultimate release of the half dozen shorts Bing made for Mack Sennett. In common with the other five, Bing played Bing. He was a radio crooner with plans to elope with Florine McKinney against the wishes of her father (Irving Bacon) and fiancé (Franklin Pangborn). In the film's nineteenth minute, true love prevails. Scenes from the film were incorporated in *Down Memory Lane* (1949)

SING YOU SINNERS Film. Filmed in the middle months of 1938, *Sing You Sinners* saw Donald O'Connor making his film debut as one of the three Beebe Brothers. Bing and Fred MacMurray were the other two. Also making her film debut was Ellen Drew as MacMurray's wife to be. Or so Paramount's publicity handouts would have us believe. In fact Ellen Drew had played in a Crosby film a couple of years earlier. That was *Rhythm on the Range* when she was known as Terry Ray. The name change came about so that there was no confusion regarding her gender. Two of the songs composed for the film were associated with Bing forever after. Johnny Burke and James V. Monaco penned "I've got a Pocketful of Dreams" whilst Frank Loesser and Hoagy Carmichael were responsible for "Small Fry". They were both performed on screen by Bing assisted by MacMurray and O'Connor. There was no title song, although Paramount held the rights to a song written in 1930 by Sam Coslow and W. Franke Harling and titled "Sing You Sinners". That version was sung by Lillian Roth in the film *Honey*. Two other personalities have tenuous associations with *Sing You Sinners*. The dressing room adjoining Bing's was occupied by Jack Benny, who had just signed with Paramount. And Guy Mitchell tested for the role which eventually went to O'Connor. By the time of the film's release Bing's association with popular films of merit was being recognised and the National Board of Review voted it one of the ten best English language films of the year. The public and the critics agreed. *Variety* summed it up nicely with the words, "Homespun, down to earth, and as natural as eggs for breakfast".

SINGER, A DANCER, A / CROONER, A COMIC, A Song(s). Irving Berlin never liked to discard a song once he had laboured over words and music. When he was commissioned to write the score for *White Christmas* (1954) Fred Astaire was intended as Bing's co-star. "A Singer, a Dancer" reflected their respective skills, although Astaire was admired as a vocalist more than Bing was as a dancer. When Astaire's role went to Danny Kaye, Berlin took out his eraser and his composition became "A Crooner, a Comic". Despite all that hard work the song did not make the film's final cut.

SITTIN' IN THE SUN (COUNTIN' MY MONEY) Song. This Berlin composition for *White Christmas* (1954) suffered the same fate as the previous entry. It was written with Bing in mind and somehow the title seems to impart the same philosophy as Berlin's "Lazy" which was so suited to Crosby when it was included in *Holiday Inn* (1942). But there was a two year delay between Berlin completing his score for *White Christmas* and that film going before the cameras and the song was not used.

SKINNER, FRANK (1897-1968) Composer. Frank Skinner was joint orchestrator on *East Side of Heaven* (1939) but scored *If I Had My Way* in its entirety the following year. As both films were made for Universal outside Bing's Paramount contract, it was only to be expected that production staff on Universal's payroll would be employed and Skinner worked exclusively for that studio. Although he was nominated for five Oscars, it's only in recent times that Skinner's work has been rediscovered and is appearing on CDs celebrating Hollywood's golden years of film music. He made his initial impact working on horror films, which were a Universal speciality at the time the two Crosby pictures were shot. Between the two Crosby's he wrote the score for *Son of Frankenstein* (1939). In the 1950s he composed the music for Universal's glossy weepies like *Imitation of Life* (1958). He remained with

Universal throughout his career, his last two assignments being *Shenandoah* (1965) and *Madame X* (1966).

SKIPWORTH, ALISON (1863-1952) Actress. London born Alison Skipworth played Countess Rostova in *Here is my Heart* (1934). She was one of the attendants to Princess Alexandra, played by Kitty Carlisle and Bing's leading lady in the picture. You knew what to expect of Alison Skipworth when her name appeared on cinema posters. She specialised in playing haughty grand dames. Her performance in *Here is my Heart* was typical. She entered films in 1921 after almost twenty years on Broadway and spent most of her film career at Paramount in the 1930s. As in her solo Crosby film appearance, she was never top billed but always had a character role of substance.

SMALL FRY Song. Frank Loesser and Hoagy Carmichael wrote it for *Sing You Sinners* (1938). It summed up the big brother-little brother attitudes of Joe Beebe (Bing) and Mike Beebe (Donald O'Connor), with interjections by David Beebe (Fred MacMurray), when it was performed in a nightclub sequence. Decca's studio recording substituted Johnny Mercer for Donald O'Connor in a cheeky duet with Bing and it continued to earn composer royalties when Bing featured it with appropriate guests on his radio and television shows.

The Beebe Brothers sing "Small Fry"

SMARTY Song. "Smarty" opened the 1937 film *Double or Nothing*. It was the only Ralph Freed-Burton Lane composition used in that film, the main musical items being provided by Johnny Burke and Arthur Johnston.

SMILE RIGHT BACK AT THE SUN Song. The title tells us right away that the lyrics are the work of Johnny Burke. It was the philosophical, optimistic song which Bing managed to sing during a train journey whilst shaving in *Welcome Stranger*. That was when Bing was on his way to a small town in Maine to cover as doctor whilst the regular G.P., Barry Fitzgerald, took a holiday. When Bing was departing from the town the two doctors performed the song together en route to the bus station.

SMITH, ALEXIS [Gladys Smith] (1921-!993) Actress. As Winifred Stanley in *Here Comes the Groom* (1951) Alexis Smith played the second female lead and was romantically paired with Franchot Tone whilst Bing won Jane Wyman. The film ended with the four of them singing "In the Cool, Cool, Cool of the Evening". During the previous ten years Smith had been under contract with Warner Bros., where she was frequently cast as "the other woman", so her graduation to Paramount did little to alter that. She said, "there are so many more interesting things to think about than whether Ida Lupino or Jane Wyman got the roles I should have gotten". She had the looks to be topped billed yet it rarely happened. She was still attractive when she was cast in the television series "Dallas" in 1984.

SMITH, SIR C[HARLES] AUBREY (1863-1948) Bing gets on the wrong side of C. Aubrey Smith near the start of *East Side of Heaven* (1939) when he serenades him with "Happy Birthday to You". By the end of the film all is well and Bing is offered a job by that same gentleman. Smith's knighthood was bestowed in 1944 for services to Anglo-American amity, by which time he was seen as the senior British resident in Hollywood where he was perhaps best known as team captain of the Hollywood Cricket Club. He had played in Test cricket for England in 1889. In films, he was invariably cast as a benevolent sort, which is why we knew at the beginning of *East Side of Heaven* that all would end well as far as his relationship with Bing was concerned. With dozens of memorable performances from which to select as examples of his work I'll settle for two favourites, *Kidnapped* (1938), when he played the Duke of Wellington, and *Little Women* (1949), his last film, when he played Mr. Lawrence.

Keith Parkinson

Adventures of a Ballad Hunter: An Investigation into a Tantalizing "What If"

Martin McQuade's researches into a proposed Bing film took him down some unexpected trails.

> **Adventures of a Ballad Hunter** (1946): Paramount considered casting Bing in an adaptation of the autobiography of folk-lore singer John Avery Lomax.

This intriguing entry appears on the list of unrealized Bing Crosby film projects detailed in Fred

Reynolds book, *The Road to Hollywood*. The life of John Lomax (1867-1948), the American musical anthropologist who archived and preserved our nation's treasury of folk and cowboy songs would have been well suited to Crosby, considering his own deep affinity for the native songs of America and his efforts to increase their popularity. In fact, a song forever associated with him, 'Home on the Range', was first published by John Lomax in 1910 in *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*.

The saga of John Lomax traveling up and down the land seeking the songs Americans were singing in the early twentieth century would have been an ideal scenario which could have continued a vogue of recent Crosby films (*Birth of the Blues*, *Dixie*) which dealt with our nation's musical heritage.

My interest in this unfulfilled endeavor was further aroused by a chance discovery of the Winter/Spring issue of *The Folklife Center News*, the magazine published by The American Folklife Center of The Library of Congress. Contained in an interview dealing with the filmmaking career of the renowned folksinger Pete Seeger is this passage:

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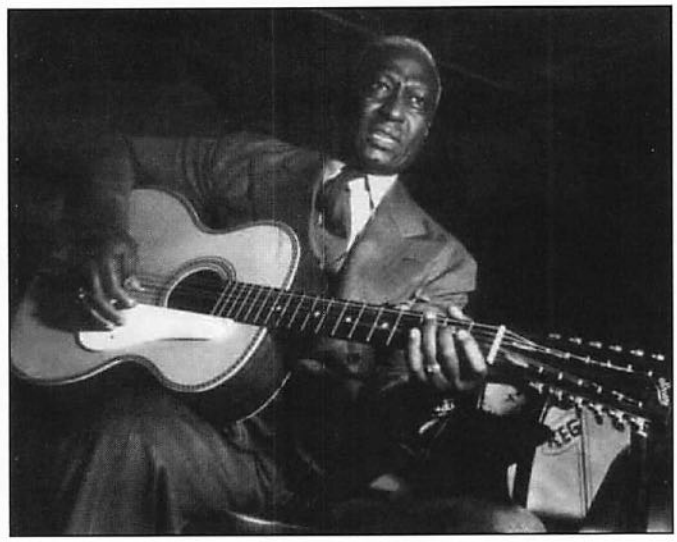
"Another of Pete's friends in the blues world provided him with his most challenging film-editing job. It started when a television station agreed to make a half-hour program about Leadbelly. [Real name Huddie William Ledbetter – born January 23, 1888, died December 6, 1949 - an American folk and blues musician, notable for his clear and forceful singing, his virtuosity on the twelve string guitar, and the rich songbook of folk standards he introduced.] However, the only footage available of the great blues singer was from a 1935 *March of Time* newsreel, in which Leadbelly and John Lomax reenacted their first meeting and their later relationship. The newsreel footage showed Leadbelly singing while dressed in prison stripes, emphasizing that he had first come to prominence as a singer while in prison for attempted murder and other crimes. Leadbelly had always been uncomfortable and ashamed of that image, and the Seegers wanted to avoid using it if they could. Luckily, they found another option. When filmmaker John Cohen told Pete: "Out in Los Angeles I met a man who has some Leadbelly movies in his closet," the Seegers sprang to action.

In 1944, Pete explained, Leadbelly had gone to California for a movie role. The idea was that he play himself: They thought of Bing Crosby playing the part of John Lomax. It was going to be based on Lomax's book 'Adventures of a Ballad Hunter'. Well, the movie never got made, and Leadbelly eventually came back east, disappointed. But while he was there an artist [Blanding Sloan], said, "Leadbelly, I've got a movie camera. Would you come to my house? I'd like to film you." Leadbelly said, "Don't put any prison stripes on me or anything like that." He dressed in a nice suit and a bow tie and sang two songs. But [Sloan and his co-worker, Wah Ming Chang,] did persuade Leadbelly . . . they said, "Come out back and sing like you might be outdoors. Nothing but you, and a straw hat on your head, and the blue sky behind you." And that's the way they did "Pick a Bale of Cotton." So they did three songs in total.



Leadbelly in action.

Pete's task of editing the film was made vastly more complicated by the fact that the footage was silent. Leadbelly was filmed playing along with his records, with the idea that the recorded song could be inserted as the film's audio track. The challenge was to synchronize the audio from Leadbelly's records with the silent film footage, and at least one professional film editor found the task too daunting. Pete sat down in his barn with his Moviola, a film-editing machine that cost the considerable sum of three thousand dollars. "It took me two weeks," he remembered.

"I kept cutting back and forth, with lots of cuts, so if it would get a quarter of a second out of synch, I'd cut it, and get it back in synch. Every time I cut, I could get it back in synch again . . . . So with those three songs, and me singing and talking about Leadbelly, and some still pictures of Leadbelly, came a half-hour show."

The Seegers' copy of the resulting program, *Two Links of the Chain*, can be dated to about 1963. Ironically, more than thirty years after Leadbelly's Hollywood career fizzled, Paramount made a biographical movie about Leadbelly rather than John Lomax. In *Leadbelly* (1976), Roger E. Mosley played Leadbelly, and James Brodhead played a supporting role as Lomax. Some of the footage from *Two Links of the Chain* inspired a scene of Mosley playing and singing outdoors in a straw hat. Subsequently, in 1985 Film Images released Pete's edited version of the Sloan and Chang Leadbelly footage as a separate film, entitled *Three Songs by Leadbelly*."

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The scene of the legendary blues guitarist

discovered playing in the penitentiary is strikingly reminiscent of the scene in *Birth of the Blues* when Crosby raises the bail for Memphis, portrayed by Brian Donlevy.

Additional information regarding the planned film of *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* was discovered at the website for The Association for Cultural Equity, founded by John Lomax's son, Alan. Available here is a John Lomax/Leadbelly chronology prepared by archivists Ellen Harold and Dan Fleming which includes this entry:

> 1945. February. Paramount options John A. Lomax's projected autobiography, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, with Bing Crosby to star as Lomax and Josh White as Lead Belly. The film is never made but Lead Belly stays in California until the end of the year, hoping to be involved in the project.

(It may be significant to note that in early 1945 Crosby performed 'One Meat Ball', a song identified with the renowned black guitarist/singer Josh White, on both *The Kraft Music Hall* and *Mail Call*.)

My fascination with this project led me to Todd Harvey, Folklife Specialist of The American Folklife Center, who informed me about a biography of John Lomax written by Nolan Porterfield entitled *The Last Cavalier* (University of Illinois Press, 1996). Mr. Harvey was very kind to provide, via e-mail, a synopsis of a section from this book pertinent to the matter at hand.

> In October, 1945, Reader's Digest published a profile of John A. Lomax. This led to increased public awareness of his life and his forthcoming autobiography, 'Adventures of a Ballad Hunter'.
>
> "Russell Holman, Paramount Studios' eastern production manager wrote Lomax on October 19th that Paramount was 'extremely enthusiastic' about the possibility of a film depicting his colorful adventures." (p.476).
>
> Paramount wanted Lomax to complete his book so that they could use it as the basis for the adaptation. They eventually offered a $2500 option for 120 days, with an additional $22,500 if the film were made. It was not made because Lomax could not finish the manuscript. It was eventually published in February, 1947.
>
> "There was a brief rumor, which reached a few papers in Texas, that Lomax's role in the movie would be played by Bing Crosby, a story perhaps inspired by Lomax, or perhaps merely by the fact that Bing Crosby was Paramount's leading musical star at the time. Wags joked that Alan would be played by Shirley Temple – or Rin-Tin-Tin." (p.477) John A. Lomax's papers from that time are at the University of Texas at Austin.

Determination to investigate this matter more deeply resulted in contact with the said Nolan Porterfield, an eminent expert in the field of American folk music. His recent biography, *The Life and Times of Jimmie Rodgers* (University of Illinois Press, 1979) has won high praise, and his long running 78 rpm radio program Old Scratchy Records, produced by Western's Public Radio, has attracted legions of devoted listeners. I am most grateful for this communiqué:

> "I regret that I can tell you very little about the proposed filming of John Lomax's autobiography. The brief mention I gave of it (and the Crosby connection) in my biography came from two brief articles in the Lomax files, one from the Dallas Morning News, March 25th, 1946, and one from the Daily Texan (University of Texas), April 4th, 1946. My personal impression is that both articles were more or less "planted" by Lomax, and the Crosby connection was wishful thinking on his part – but I can't vouch for that. Crosby would have been a highly illogical choice for the role, although Hollywood was known for even more bizarre casting in those days."

Mr. Porterfield generously answered specific inquiries which were put to him.

> "I know nothing of the possible involvement of Josh White, and/or Leadbelly, although it is true that Leadbelly spent some time in Hollywood around that time, with vague hopes that his story might find its way into film. In any event, Lomax's autobiography didn't appear until February, 1947, and Paramount had dropped the option long before. I seriously doubt that Crosby knew John Lomax, or his son, Alan, or that he ever met Leadbelly, but that's only my personal opinion. Likewise, I doubt that any serious pre-production work was ever done on the project. I wish I could be of more help. Best wishes for your article."

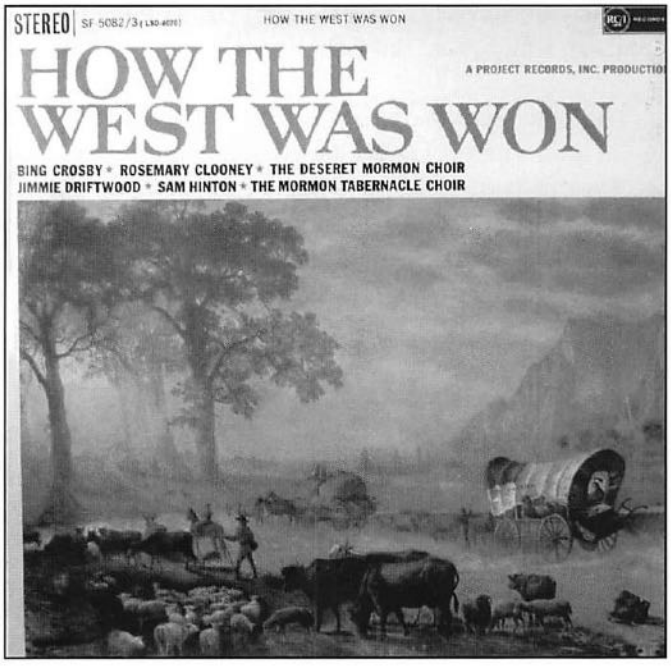
A postscript to this tantalizing " What If?" is this entry found in the aforementioned Lomax/Leadbelly chronology found at the website for The Association for Cultural Equity:

> 1976. Acclaimed African-American photographer, composer, writer, and filmmaker Gordon Parks makes a Paramount feature film based on Leadbelly's life story from birth to his 1933–34 meeting with John A. Lomax. Since a wary Alan Lomax had declined to cooperate, the Alan Lomax character in the film is called "Tom." Though well received by critics, Leadbelly fails to gain wide distribution. The singer's family objects to Leadbelly being portrayed as a convict; his daughter Jessie Mae Ledbetter Baisley and a second cousin, John Ledbetter, sue Paramount for intrusion of privacy and defamation of character.

These objections by the Leadbelly estate echo the reservations raised by Leadbelly himself to depictions of his criminal past, reservations which may have contributed to the abandonment of the envisioned film.

Alan Lomax (1915-2002) continued the tradition of American folk musical scholarship which his father had spearheaded. It is worth noting that there is a Crosby connection with the younger Lomax as well. Alan Lomax promoted the early career of folk balladeer Burl Ives, a frequent guest on Crosby's radio show. Of additional interest is *How the West Was Won*, an RCA Victor double LP release, produced by Crosby's own Project Records in 1960. This undertaking to delineate the native songs of the American pioneers includes liner notes by Lee Zhito, western editor for *Billboard*. This comment is particularly interesting:

> Simon Rady who conceived, adapted and produced the album, spent many days in the archives of the Library of Congress in quest of material. He then called upon the nation's leading scholars of Western lore, including such noted specialists as Alan Lomax and Sam Hinton to help cull the most appropriate songs from the vast heritage.


STEREO
HOW THE WEST WAS WON
HOW THE WEST WAS WON
BING CROSBY • ROSEMARY CLOONEY • THE DESERET MORMON CHOIR
JIMMIE DRIFTWOOD • SAM HINTON • THE MORMON TABERNACLE CHOIR

Many of the Crosby selections (several with Rosemary Clooney) on this most ambitious LP feature this credit: collected, adapted and edited by John and Alan Lomax. They are: 'Shenandoah (Across the Wide Missouri)', 'Bound for the Promised Land', 'Buffalo Gals', 'Old Settlers' Song', '900 Miles', 'Skip to My Lou', 'Jennie Jenkins', 'Streets of Laredo', 'Git Along Little Doggies', and 'Red River Valley'. *(Editor: See Keeping Track – the LP is being reissued on CD!)*

In 1963 Crosby recorded 'Tom Dooley', a song first published by Alan Lomax in Folk Songs, USA (1948). This was one of twenty-two songs performed under the Project Records banner but never issued. It is also germane to this essay that Crosby recorded Woody Guthrie's 'This Land is Your Land' in 1964 and Pete Seeger's 'If I Had a Hammer' (also unreleased) in 1972.

Thus is traced a fascinating thread in the illustrious tradition of American folklore, linking America's Troubadour to a dynasty of America's Ballad Hunters.

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Alan Lomax produced and directed *Cajun Country: Don't Drop the Potato*, which aired nationally as part of the PBS series *American Patchwork: Songs and Stories about America* (1990). Dovetailing neatly into this is a recent record-album find entitled 'Justin Wilson's Wilsonville U.S. and A.', released by Tower Records (DT-5009) and manufactured by Capitol Records. Bing indulged his perennial penchant for composing liner notes with this LP. These remarks, which conclude with the bard's handwritten signature, are typically droll:

> In these days we're surfeited with comedy programs on TV, on records and on films, when comedians are laboring endlessly to contrive something fresh, original and provocative, It's a welcome thing when some diligent A&R man produces a monologist who is not " sick", who is not a political satirist (though that's all good stuff), and whose material doesn't have to be a little shady to titillate his auditors. (That must be the longest sentence since Washington Irving's "Westminster Abbey.")
>
> Well, maybe "titillate" will save it. Anyhow, Wilson certainly isn't "sick." He seems uncommonly robust, and though his subject matter is mostly about a State where politics is highly susceptible to satiric shifts, he eschews anything so obvious. Again, though he may break down and raise a few eyebrows at a local "fish fry", his material is generally as clean as Lassie's upper left incisor.
>
> Cajun humor, Cajun dialect, I don't suppose is too well known. I got a little of it on me when, in the old days, Connee Boswell used to holler such things as "Hey, Pierre, you see my cow. Push him home, huh."
>
> But Wilson's got the whole bit here. This is genuine. This is authentic. When my first wife heard him, she exclaimed, "Why, he sounds like just like Uncle Buck." (Uncle Buck's a big carbine and scattergun man from Georgetown, Louisiana.)
>
> I find him very funny, and I know you will, too. His delivery and his timing are truly delightful. I really think this fella could do for Louisiana what Bob Burns did for Arkansas - and that, my friends, is high praise indeed.
>
> **Bing Crosby**

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I reported in the Spring, 2007 issue of Bing that Lauren Ashley Brookmeyer, an undergraduate studying

media at Hofstra University had decided to profile Bing for her class thesis. Lauren interviewed both Mrs. Crosby and myself for her radio piece, entitled 'A Tribute to Bing'. Lauren has informed me that her broadcast essay has just received the prestigious Jeffrey C. Kraus Radio Scholarship award, which is granted annually to the best radio program of the year. Mr. Kraus was for many years the guiding spirit of WVHC, Hofstra University's radio station. Since his death in 1993, the Hofstra Radio Alumni Association has administered the Scholarship awards program in his memory. The first prize scholarship is $1,000, granted to the Hofstra student with the best radio piece of the year.

Congratulations, Lauren!

Martin McQuade

One Sweet Letter From You

Members' views, opinions and comments are always welcomed and we have great pleasure in reproducing some of the letters received since the last issue

Dr. William Stimson, Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington, USA (phone: 509-467-0157, email: wstimson2@aol.com)

I don't know how much you are able to follow our effort to get the Clemmer named for Bing. We got a lot of national publicity in the U.S. The show was a big success and we raised $37,000 for the "Bing Crosby Theater" sign. It is being built now and will be unveiled in April or May.

As an off-shoot of the Bing Crosby Theater, I'm going to write a kind of guide to Bing Crosby-associated places in Spokane. I'm hunting down what photos exist locally of places like Stubecks, the building the Peking restaurant was in (Bing mentions it in *Call Me Lucky*), etc. But honestly there aren't that many photos. I would appreciate it if you would put out the word that I am looking for any photos or other information about Bing's years in Spokane. I know your organization has done a tremendous amount of work on such things. I'm going to publish the book by Christmas. Donors will get free copies—and a personal tour of Spokane, should they make it here. I know Bing's childhood territory very well; in fact, I grew up on Sharp Avenue within sight of Bing's house.

Let me know if you have any ideas that would help to bring together this "Guide to Bing Crosby's Years In Spokane."

(Editor: Since Bill first wrote, the Theater sign has now been unveiled as you may have read earlier in this issue.)

Norman Wolfe, Cumming, Georgia, USA

Thanks for the magazine. Got into it last night and was delighted to note the absence of the editor's picture! I liked the back cover photo. My goodness, did something actually cost a dime once?

We didn't know about Laura Wiggins, didn't even realize she had been in poor health. We both liked her and I have written Wig my sincere condolences.

I enjoyed the Giddins article on the new DVD and immediately played *If I Had My Way*, which I had not up to then. My memory was that it was kind of insipid (it was) and Crosby didn't even have a romance. I wonder if any other romantic idol of the day could have brought that off. Anyway, I digress. What I wanted to say was that, when I first saw the film, eons ago, the Eddie Leonard scene was not included. I always wondered about it. Giddins is bang on. Leonard is wonderful and I am so pleased to have that bit of him. Vaudeville must have been wonderful when guys like him and the Foys and Fields and others were in their prime. What an individualistic version of 'Ida'! I loved it.

I also loved the Bing Bond poster. Very clever.

I regret to learn John McNicholas is stepping down and sorry his project was not more enthusiastically supported. All members who did not subscribe to the series should be locked in a room and forced to listen to Al Martino.

I was sorry to learn of the passing of Fred Reynolds whose books on Crosby recordings and films were of immense value to me in researching *Troubadour*. He did more than just list details, although he was painstaking about that. I found his observations incisive and, as I think I have said to you, his books, your own, Pairpoint's, are going to make the work of future biographers far easier.

(Editor: I always enjoy Norman's humour and we have a long running joke about the number of times my photograph appears in the magazine. Hope the Al Martino fans aren't too sensitive!)

Keith Parkinson, St. Helens, UK

Thanks for BING 145. The highlight for me was Judy Schmid's interview with Alice Ludes. What a remarkable memory for a 92 year old. It is reminiscences like this that flesh out the bare facts and statistics of Bing's professional career. And as the "Once in a While" section of the magazine continues to expand, there will be an ever diminishing number of people with first hand memories of working with Bing.

(Editor: The Alice Ludes interview has been appreciated by many members and our thanks to Judy Schmid for her article. And while on the subject of nonagenarians, our very enthusiastic member in Essex, Trevor Wagstaff, has

been in correspondence with Dame Vera Lynn in recent months and has given her copies of our magazine. Vera, now aged 90, has sent Trevor a nice reply as you will read.)

Trevor Wagstaff, Hornchurch, Essex, UK
Herewith a copy of the letter I received from Dame Vera Lynn, which I am very pleased with.

Dear Mr. Wagstaff,

Many apologies for this belated reply to your kind letter of last August – unfortunately, it was lost under a pile of mail.

Thank you so much for the magazine, it is really very interesting. As far as my memories of Bing are concerned, I could not possibly go into all the days we spent together rehearsing, but the one thing that did stick in my mind was when we had tea, he had a huge piece of fruit cake and a large lump of ice-cream with it! Probably a good combination, but not one we were familiar with. I hope this small anecdote might be of interest!

Once again, many thanks for the magazine and again apologies for the delay.

Yours,

Vera Lynn

George Patmore, Cressage, Shropshire, UK

Having learned (via BING 145) of John Marshall's DVD "Footloose Follies" I wrote to John to buy a copy.

Marie and I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the six hours (in easy 1 1/2-hour segments) of good entertainment by one hundred and twenty four different performers (an orchestra or group and performers appearing several times e.g. Bing, Perry, Dean counted only once).

Yes, there are some slight technical glitches but we found that they did not detract from enjoying the content quality. Some of the Bing items we had certainly not seen before! Also the comedy was not the current trend "in your face" type (which is anything but funny) but was real laughter provoking variety - the sort that the BBC completely fail to deliver today!

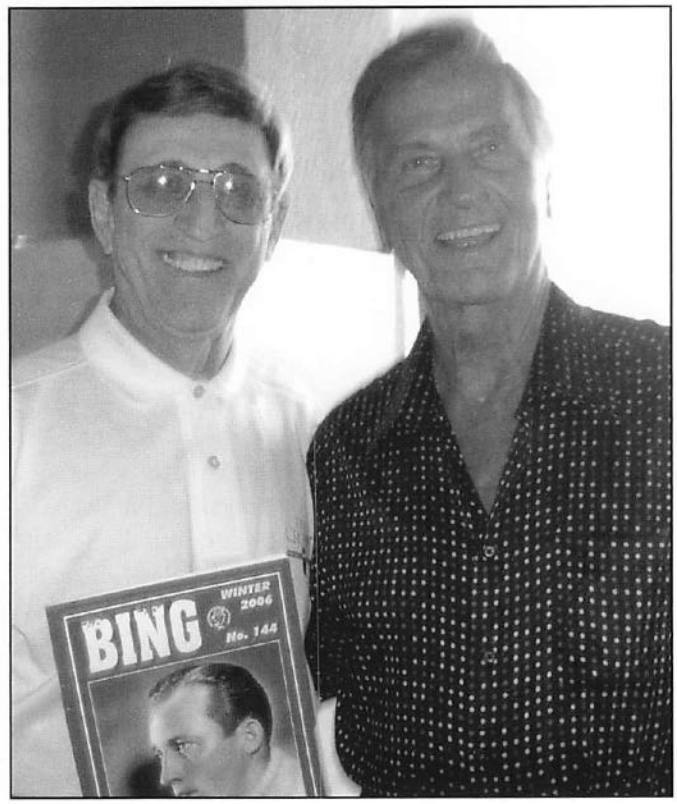
We think that John's great efforts in producing this DVD deserve a wide positive response. Don't let apathy kill such a good project.

Graham Pascoe, Bathurst, NSW, Australia.

My copy of BING #145 reached me from David Currington recently and my thanks go to all concerned with its production. A couple of stories had an unintended Aussie flavour. When I read of the new Bing Crosby Restaurant in the Palm Springs area, I was reminded that in the early days of The Victorian Bing Crosby Society members attended a dinner-dance at Bing's Restaurant in Melbourne. As for Bing's "White Christmas", it not only resonated with homesick Americans fighting overseas during World War 2. My research for my book detected references to its dramatic effect on Australian servicemen fighting overseas, although none would have experienced a white Christmas.

Bob Pasch, Ahwatukee, Arizona, USA

We attended a Pat Boone concert on April 17 at the Palm Ridge Summit located in Sun City West, Arizona. I am forwarding to you a copy of a picture with Pat Boone and me taken following the concert. During the concert, Pat mentioned that Bing was his hero and as you know, he is an Honorary Member of the Club. Pat took the magazine with him so he could read it.



We did a concert at the Sundial Auditorium in Sun City, Arizona, on Sunday, June 17. I performed a 1 hour 20 minute show with piano accompaniment before a crowd of 1,200. They still love that Bing music and we received a standing "O" following the performance.

We are also very excited about doing a private event on August 14 at the Crosby Restaurant in Palm Springs, CA. This should be really a lot of fun.

Editor: Bob really does a great job promoting Bing and we were delighted to see the following press release. Congratulations, Bob!

> Bob Pasch, a resident of Ahwatukee for the past 10 years, was honored in Las Vegas on Monday, May 27, by being presented with the prestigious Reel Award trophy in the Classic Crooner Category. . . These awards were presented at The 16th ANNUAL REEL AWARDS an international event held at the Imperial Palace in Las Vegas. The awards are presented to honor the best tribute artists and impersonators in the industry in 10 categories.

Footlight Records, New York, USA
To one and all:

It is with deep regret that I must inform you that we will be closing on July 4th. It has been a difficult decision, but there seems to be no choice. The company was going into debt by keeping the store open. Our rent went from $2500.00 to $5000.00 then to $7000.00 and the landlord wanted to raise it again the following year. This was a dream I had since I was a kid, to own a record store. If I had closed the store sooner and not incurred such a debt then maybe we could have continued as a web-based company. . .

Even that is doubtful in today's market. Downloading is affecting us more and more plus you have the fact that many smaller companies that produce Cast recordings pre-sell their recordings at a discount price. This has probably cut into about 40% of our sales in cast CDs.

Last of all many of you may not realize that even though I have a direct account with companies like Sony Music I do not pay the same price as Amazon. Amazon's cost is much less than I have to pay, so how can I compete with this unfair practice?

Most of all I would like to thank all of you that have been our regular customers and stuck by us even when you could have saved a dollar going somewhere else. We will miss the communications that we have had with our customers, many of you for dozens of years.

The site will be up and running through July 4th you may still order through it till the 5th. Our e-mail address sales@footlight.com will be functioning till then. After that, you will be able to reach us at the same phone number (718) 963 0750, (the phone number will be valid through the 18th of July) or through our old e-mail address: footlight1@aol.com. We will still be here working for weeks after the site is closed in case you have questions about your orders.

You will be able to find the balance of our stock on Amazon under the name Footlight-com.

All the best to each and every one of you now and in the future.

(Editor: What sad news. The British equivalent – Ray Purslow's Record Centre in Birmingham - appears to have been similarly affected and has gone to a mail order operation only. Times are certainly a-changing).

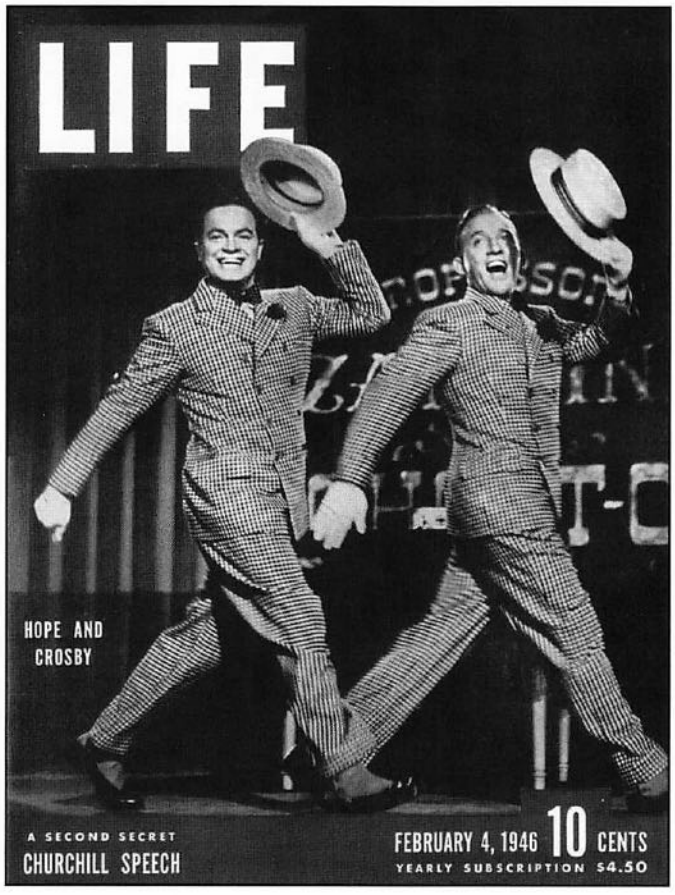
Bing: An Up-Front Guy

Jon Oye looks at another aspect of Bing's career.

For at least a couple of decades during the last century, if the average American Joe wasn't listening to a Crosby record on the Victrola, or hearing the strains of a neighbor's wafting out of an open window, there was a good chance he'd be listening to him on the radio, or watching him on a theater screen – whether in features, shorts, or newsreels – or seeing his face at the newsstand. With that kind of across the board saturation, it's amazing that the reason Bing gave for balking at going into television in the 1950s was to avoid overexposure. Looking back at his constant presence in the mass media from the 1930s through the early 1950s and beyond, one would be compelled to come to the conclusion that this Crosby fellow *must* have been overexposed, if not for the fact that the public didn't seem to tire of him.

Bing's recording, radio, and film successes through the years are all well documented – if you know where to look – to the point that we fans are perhaps at times guilty of taking his staggering achievements for granted. But the scope of the overwhelming popularity Bing enjoyed during his lifetime comes jarringly into focus when examining how frequently weekly and monthly magazines once carried his image on their covers.

Bing was represented on the front of just about every major U.S. publication of his day. *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Collier's*, *Liberty*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Life*, and *Life*'s news-and photo-oriented rival, *Look* (on which Bing appeared at least nine times), as well as such specialized publications as *Field & Stream* and *American Home*. All used Bing's likeness to attract potential purchasers. His image also graced a host of celeb-watching magazines, such as *People* and its forerunners, the numerous movie mags of the 1930s through the '70s.

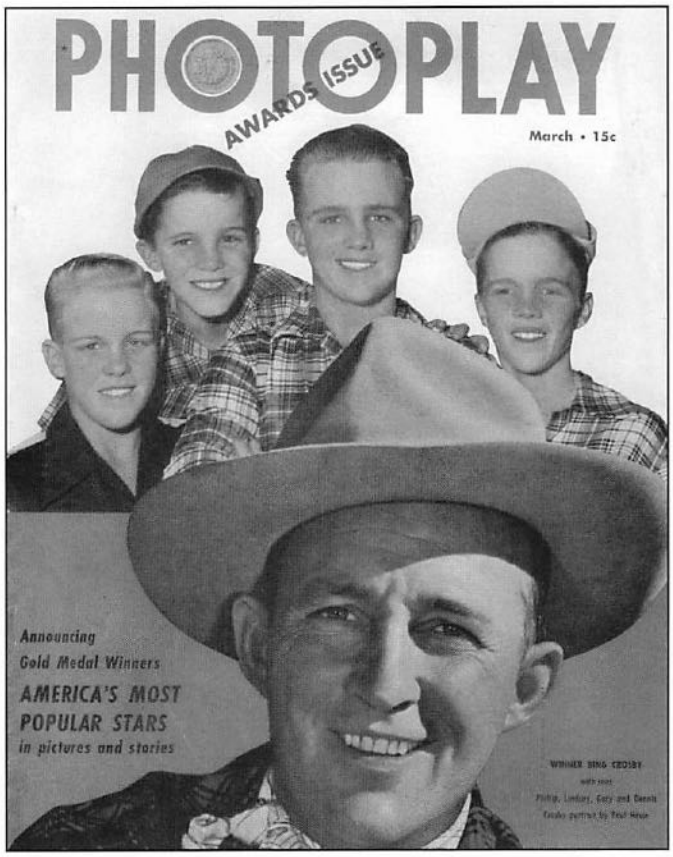


In addition to those independent periodicals, nearly every Sunday paper in the U.S. carried a magazine supplement, as well as (beginning in the '50s) a TV

listing insert for the week ahead, also usually in the form of a magazine. Many of these weeklies were published nationally and distributed to the local papers of several cities. They were so pervasive that some of the TV listings inserts, though they came from separate sources and had different covers, used the same generic name (e.g., *TV Magazine*). Bing appeared on his fair share of these over the years as well.

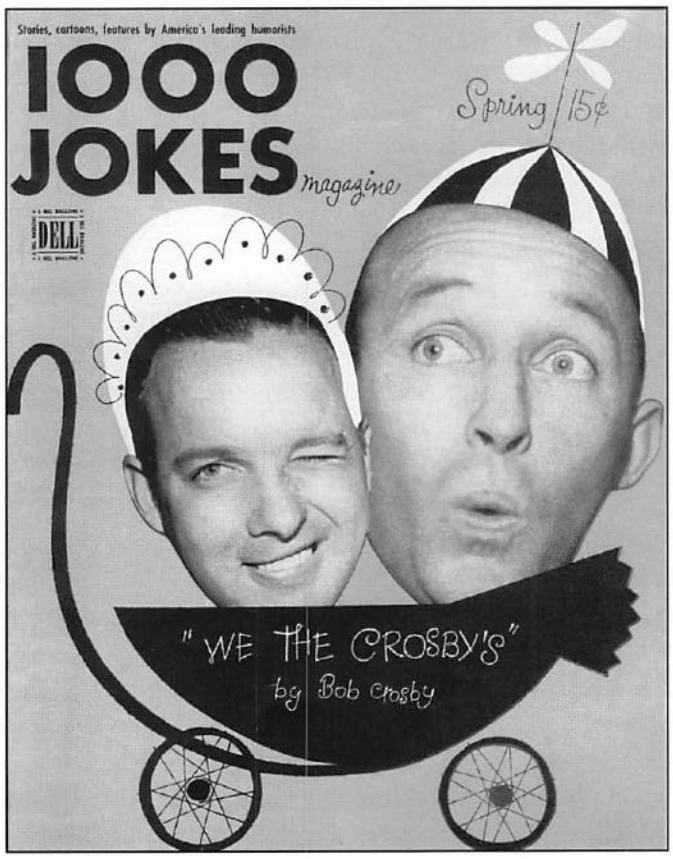
Styles, tastes, printing methods, retouching techniques, and photographic processes have gone through significant changes in the years since Bing's earliest cover shots, but the ultimate goal has always been to make the subject look as desirable as possible, in order to sell as many magazines as possible. Then, as now, movie stars – who already presumably had a leg up on the general public in the looks department – made for convenient fodder, and there were ways to make them appear even more physically perfect.

Nowadays, this photographic perfection is achieved digitally, in computer programs designed specifically for that purpose. Back in pre-Photoshop days, cover subjects' photographs routinely received airbrush makeovers – which were done by hand – before going to press. Nine times out of ten, the color photos the reader saw were actually black and white photographs to which "fake color" had been added – meaning the colors had been determined by an artist or layout man (they were usually men in those days) and applied by a printer.



Often, an illustrator was assigned to paint a portrait of that month's cover story subject, since true color photography was expensive and difficult to reproduce. Color separation was easier to control with an illustration, and in the 1930s Bing's cover images almost always appeared in the form of paintings. The celeb portraits of that era were highly idealized, never revealing so much as a hint of the flaws or blemishes normally visible on any given famous face (after all, no managing editor who strove to stay in business wanted to rub his bread and butter the wrong way), with unnaturally brilliant colors liberally applied to illustration board. As a result, some of these quasi-masterpieces may appear at first glance a bit bizarre to today's eyes – though there's a certain antiquated charm to many of them just the same. Whatever one's opinion, the commercial portraiture being produced during that era represents a decidedly lost art.

Beginning some time in the 1940s, film and recording studio publicity photos gradually began to replace illustrations as the medium of choice, with the exception of a few holdouts (*Time* and *The Saturday Evening Post* – the home of beloved illustrator of Americana, Norman Rockwell – being two of the most noteworthy). This trend continued well into the 1970s, when cover photography began to be perceived as an art unto itself, thanks to practitioners like the still active Annie Leibovitz – a prime example of the celebrity photographer as celebrity – whose very star power attracts all manner of stars to actually pose for exclusive cover shots. By that time many advances in the printing process had taken place, to the point that it became more economically feasible and less time consuming to use full color photography in all facets of print, including covers, ads, billboards, and in-store displays.



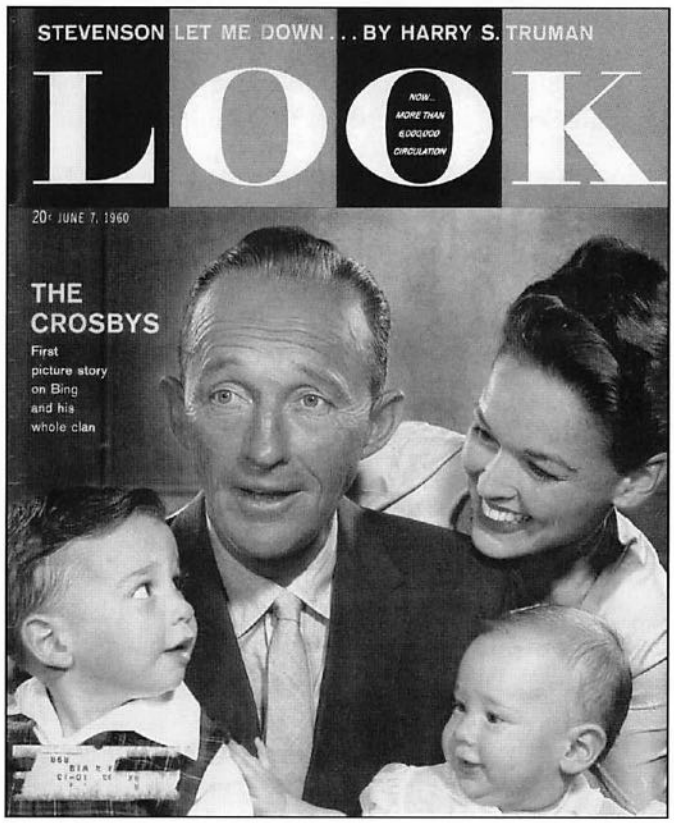
With the exception of posing specifically for cover

shots, our man was well represented throughout the course of this forty-year metamorphosis.

BING #109 featured an article entitled "Front Cover Crosby", which was accompanied by a list made up primarily of British publications on whose covers Bing had appeared. Following is a further, but by no means complete, list of magazine covers, from the U.S. and elsewhere, which bore Bing's image during his lifetime. Readers are welcome to add to it, in care of the editor.

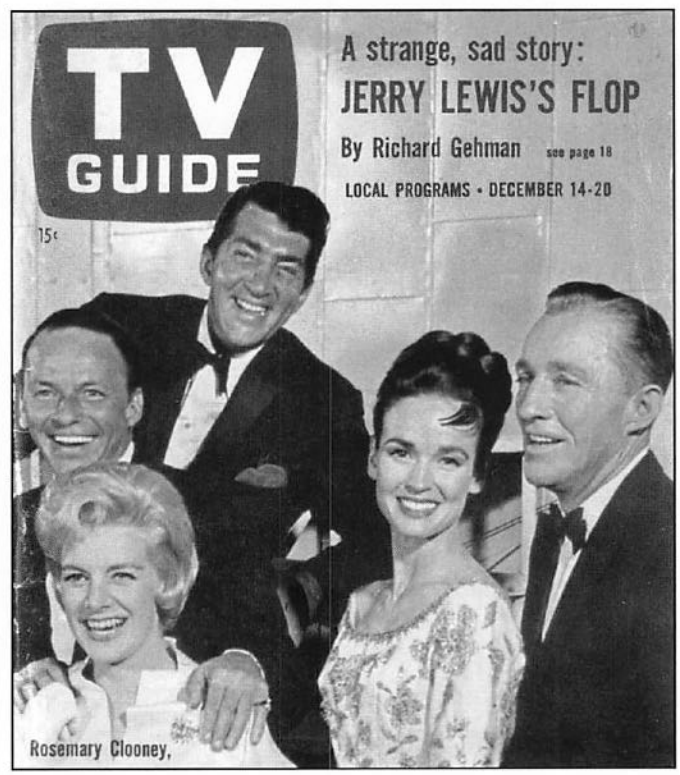
Key: Name of magazine (country of origin, if other than the U.S.) – issue date – description of cover illustration, if other than a solo photo of Bing. Sunday newspaper magazine supplements are indicated with (sup.).

1000 Jokes – Spring, 1950 – Bing and brother Bob, as babies in pen & ink cartoon carriage
American Home – February 1956 – with son Lindsay at Hayden Lake, Idaho home
Antena (Argentina) – December 23, 1947
Best-Known Songs – 1943
Bing Crosby Album – 1949 (A Dell publication, celebrating Bing's life to date.)
Calling All Boys (comic book) – September 1947
Canadian Magazine, The (Canada) (sup.) – April 26, 1969
Chicago Tribune Picture Section, The (sup.) – May 30, 1948
Collier's – June 8, 1956 – inset of Bing with Frank Sinatra, from *High Society*
Down Beat – July 30, 1952
" " – September 22, 1954
" " – August 22, 1956 – with Louis Armstrong, from *High Society*
Family Circle, The – Sept. 24, 1937 – inset w/ Mary Carlisle, Martha Raye, in *Double or Nothing*
" " – July 14, 1939
" " – August 22, 1940
Family Weekly (sup.) – December 15, 1957 – candid shot of Bing & Kathryn, dancing
Feature Films (comic book) – June 1950 – *Riding High* in comic book format
Field & Stream – November 1973
Film Complet (France) – June 21, 1949 – w/ Joan Caulfield, publicity shot for *Welcome Stranger*
Film Pictorial (UK) – December 18, 1937
Fore (Southern CA Golfing Assoc. publication) – Spring 1969 – on links, surrounded by gallery
Funk und Film (Germany) – October 25, 1946
Guideposts (an "inspirational magazine", ed. By Norman Vincent Peale) – Nov. 1967 – family
Images du Monde (France) – September 3, 1946
Joe Palooka (comic book) – February 1950 – inset, with four sons, reading a Joe Palooka comic
Ladies' Home Journal – May 1966 – the Crosby family
Le Samedi (French Canadian) – August 1952
Liberty – March 15, 1947 – painting, in *Emperor Waltz* costume, encircled by insets of four sons
Life – February 4, 1946 – Bing & Bob, onstage in *Road to Utopia*
" – October 7, 1946 – with Joan Caulfield on movie set
" – March 10, 1961 – with Maurice Chevalier, on the set of their TV special
Look – July 6, 1937 – one of four inset photos, candid
" – December 23, 1947 – with Bob Hope, in *Road to Rio* costumes
" – January 17, 1950
" – January 13, 1953 – with Bob Hope, dancing the Highland Fling in publicity shot for *Bali*
" – March 22, 1955 – with Judy Garland
" – May 13, 1958 – with Kathryn
" – July 22, 1958 – with brother Bob Crosby
" – June 7, 1960 – with Kathryn, Harry, and Mary Frances
" – July 17, 1962 – with Kathryn, Harry, and Mary Frances


STEVENSON LET ME DOWN . . . BY HARRY S. TRUMAN
LOOK
NOW... MORE THAN 6,000,000 CIRCULATION
20¢ JUNE 7, 1960
THE CROSBYS
First picture story on Bing and his whole clan

McCall's – December 1976 – inset photo, in Santa hat, with Mary Frances
Melody – July 1935
Metronome – October 1944 – with Dinah Shore
" " – November 1946 – With Fred Astaire, from *Blue Skies*
Mon Film (France) – March 11, 1954 – with Nicole Maurey, in scene from *Little Boy Lost*
Motorcyclist – October 1942 – Bing in a candid shot with a motorcycle enthusiast
Movie and Radio Guide – March 16-22, 1940 – w/ Bob, Dottie, & Judith Barrett; *Singapore* stars
Movie Life – August 1947

Movie Story – June 1940
" " – July 1948 – painting, with Joan Fontaine, from *Emperor Waltz* studio photo
" " – April 1950 – with Coleen Gray, in *Riding High*
Movie-Radio Guide – June 20-26, 1942 – in a recording studio, with son Lindsay
National Police Gazette, The – August 1953 – with Hope, wearing Pirates and Indians uniforms
Newsweek – Jan. 28, 1946 – seated in studio, sporting necktie, fedora, and work boots!
" – January 4, 1954 – Bing smiles into CBS TV camera lens
Parade (sup.) – June 16, 1957 – with Inger Stevens, in posed publicity shot for *Man On Fire*
" " (sup.) – March 21, 1971 – with Kathryn, Mary Frances, and Nathaniel, in *Goldilocks* garb
People – December 16, 1974 – with Kathryn, in hobo makeup for Xmas TV Special
Photoplay – March 1949 – with four sons in background
Picture Show (UK) – April 23, 1955 – with Grace Kelly, publicity pose for *The Country Girl*
Popular Songs – December 1934 – painting of grinning Bing in sailor suit
Quick (a pocket size weekly) – August 8, 1949
" – October 2, 1950 – with Bob Hope, wearing Pirates & Indians baseball uniforms
" – December 25, 1950
" – October 28, 1953 – with Nicole Maurey, from *Little Boy Lost*
Radio Album – Summer 1948
Radio and Television Best – September 1948 – Bing, plus smaller shot of him with four sons
Radio and TV Mirror – August 1950
Radio Guide – September 5, 1936 – watercolor painting of Bing dressed for *Rhythm on the Range*
Radio Mirror – April 1934 – painting, in profile, wearing Captain's cap; U.S. flag as background
" " – February 1935 – painting, wearing open-collar shirt, sky blue background
" " – May 1936 – painting of smiling Bing on a black background
" " – May 1938 – with Dixie, Gary, and the twins, in bathing suits
Radio Row – May 1945
Radio Stars – June 1933 – painting of singing Bing (see back cover of *Bing* #145)
" " – October 1934
" " – June 1936 – painting of Bing against red background
Radioland – October 1933 – painting of Bing at microphone against fiery red background
Real Life Comics (comic book) – January 1947
Screen Songs – March 1946
Saturday Evening Post, The – February 14, 1953 – small inset, promoting *Call Me Lucky*
" " " – April 9, 1966 – Bing in makeup for *Stagecoach*
Screen Guide – December 1949 – Bing dressed as Santa, with four sons
Screen Romances – July 1934 – painting of Bing with Carole Lombard
" " – August 1943 – Bing in *Dixie* costume
Screen Songs – March 1946
Screen Stories – October 1949 – with Ann Blyth; publicity shot for *Top O' the Morning*
" " – August 1952 – with Jane Wyman, in publicity photo from *Just For You*
Shadowplay – February 1935 – painting of Bing and Kitty Carlisle
Song Hits – June 1937 – with Martha Raye & Shirley Ross, from *Waikiki Wedding*
" " – May 1941
" " – November 1941
" " – November 1942
" " – January 1944
" " – August 1945
" " – January 1949
" " – May 1956
Sunday News (sup.) – March 11, 1945
" " – February 15, 1948
Television (sup.) – December 9-15, 1973 – with Mary Frances, on location for Christmas Special
Tempo – June 1939 – "On the air" with John Scott Trotter
This Week (sup.) – July 3, 1945
" " – October 15, 1950
Time – April 7, 1941 – charcoal drawing of Bing surrounded by admiring women



Tuney Tunes (Netherlands) – June 1954 – with Lindsay
TV and Amusement (sup.) – September 28, 1958 with Patti Page, publicity for TV Special
TV and Radio Magazine (sup.) – March 4-10, 1956
TV Channels (sup.) – Feb. 9-15, '64 – with Kathryn
" " – December 19-25, 1965
TV Digest (sup.) – December 8-14, 1973 – separate photos of Bing and Perry Como
" " – September 4-10, 1976 – caricature drawing, with Liza Minnelli
TV Guide – January 1-7, 1954
" " – October 12-18, 1957 – inset, among several other celebrities
" " – Dec. 14-20, 1963 – with F. Sinatra, R. Clooney, D. Martin, and Kathryn
TV Magazine (sup.) – May 13-19, 1962 – caricature, with Bob Hope, hunting and fishing
" " – Dec. 13-19, 1970 – with family on the set of that year's Christmas Special
" " – Dec. 12-18, 1971 – w/ Robert Goulet, Mary Costa; from Christmas Special
" " – Dec. 12-18, 1971 – with Robert Goulet, Kathryn; Christmas Special pose
TV Prevue (sup.) – March 1-7, 1959 – pastel drawing of Bing
" " – March 12-18, 1961 – w/ Maurice Chevalier, on set of their TV Special
" " – December 10-16, 1961 – caricature of Bing piloting a gondola in Venice
TV Radio (sup.) – September 28-October 4, 1958 – pastel drawing
TV Roundup (sup.) – May 9-15, 1965 – with Diane Sherry, from *The Bing Crosby Show*
TV Screen – June 1951 – individual photos of Bing and Bob Hope
TV Times (sup.) – February 9-15, 1964 – with Kathryn
TV Week (sup.) – September 12-18, 1964 – with Carol Faylen, Diane Sherry; *Bing Crosby Show*
" " – April 11-17, 1970 – *Cooling It* with Bernadette Peters
TV-Radio Life – December 1957 – with Frank Sinatra, in *Happy Holidays with Bing & Frank*
Varsity – June 1949 – Bing and Hope, wearing Pirates Indians baseball uniforms
Whack (comic book) – December 1953 - caricature/cartoon illustration
What's On in London (UK) – December 14, 1945 – with Dottie and Bob, from *Road to Utopia*

(Editor: Thanks Jon, for a fascinating article. Jon has also put together the montage on the back cover of this issue, which uses many of these images.)

Bob Hope coped with life, death in Canton

The CantonRep web site, a service of *The Repository* in Canton, Ohio carried an interesting article by Jim Hillibish on June 16 about Bob Hope's reaction to Bing's death. As we look ahead to the 30th anniversary of that sad day, it makes touching reading.

One of the joys (and dreads) of news reporting is you wake up in the morning never knowing what the day will bring. Some people thrive on stress, hopelessly hooked on the adrenaline rush. Others don't last long.

Bob Hope was scheduled for an Oct. 21, 1977, show to benefit Aultman Hospital. On Oct. 14, his pal Bing Crosby died. The news wasn't good from Hollywood. Hope was a wreck. Nobody thought he'd come. Still, he offered to donate his time, and he was a man of his commitments.

They first attracted him in a sneaky way. They told him it was a golf tournament, and the town wanted to give him a custom-made driver club with his name engraved on the head. Anything golf caught his attention. And, oh yes, could he do 25 minutes on stage?

My news beat at that time was an odd one. I was the 3 a.m. police reporter combined with the entertainment writer. I was three years into my career, totally enamored by it and figured sleep was wasted time. On show day, we tried (begged) for an interview but no chance. Bob's PR lady insisted he was too crushed by Bing's death to face the inevitable questions.

I learned early that celebrity PR types often were prejudiced about small-town reporters, resulting in being over protective. They don't say it, but the obvious message is, "Gee, he's way too important for a little fish like you."

I knew he was staying at Brookside Country Club, so I decided to make a cold call anyway. There he was, walking into the clubhouse with his new driver, THE Leslie Townes Hope who fled England at age 4 "when I found out I couldn't be king." His entertaining debut came in front of a Cleveland fire station in 1909, doing a Charlie Chaplin impersonation.

One thing about Bob Hope: There was only one. He was exactly the same on stage, on the radio, in movies, on TV and in front of our troops as he was with a driver in his hand fresh from the practice green.

"OK, five minutes," he said, steering me to a plush couch. Wow, that was easy.

Hope looked weary as he sank into the couch. He was having trouble sleeping since Bing died.

"We just junked our television special for next Friday. Bing was going to star, doing some affectionate knifing at my career," he said. I was taken aback. I hadn't even planned an opening question, the most important one in an interview. It establishes trust

between you and your subject.

I started with "I loved Bing Crosby," a really stupid thing to say, as if he cared what I thought. He did care, and that opened the floodgate of his memories. I got the first interview with Bob Hope after Bing died. He sighed as the grief welled up. Then: "Bing's voice - it sounds like a passionate cow being milked with suede gloves."

"When vaudeville died, TV was the box they put us in. We never felt old. I don't feel anything until noon. Then it's time for my nap."

That night I wrote my piece between the police news as another reporter covered the show at the Civic Center. It was a sell-out before 5,500.

My interview went as a sidebar to the show coverage, but it was the story picked up by AP's national wire. A few reporters called me, wanting to know how Hope was taking the death.

Next morning at the police station, there was a report of an elderly man in a tuxedo seen driving golf balls in the middle of Market Avenue outside Memorial Auditorium. The cops figured it was just another nut case in a crazy city.

"What if I told you it was Bob Hope," I said.

That's the way Bob coped. A few minutes earlier, he was singing "Thanks for the memories" in the auditorium. There wasn't a dry eye in the house, especially his.

Jim Hillibish

History rewritten!

Researcher extraordinaire Gary Hamann has published more than 170 books on movies and movie actors and actresses from the 1930's and 1940's. For a full list of his books, e-mail him at gdhamann@juno.com . He also publishes a blog on the Internet showing extracts from a different one of his books each day at http://gdhamann.blogspot.com/)

Gary sent me an interesting article not long ago which I'd like to share with you. It comes from the Sunday Screen and Radio supplement to the *Oakland Tribune* issued on 12th. May, 1935. The article is by Paul Whiteman as told to Ruth Geri. It is not unusual for show business reminiscences to be wildly inaccurate especially as to dates and places and this one is no different. The Rhythm Boys are completely forgotten too but perhaps there is the odd grain of truth here and there. See what you think.

How Whiteman 'Discovered' Bing Crosby

By Paul Whiteman

Along Broadway they give me credit for having discovered Bing Crosby, George Gershwin, Morton Downey and a good way to reduce, and I've been around Broadway long enough to learn that when they give you credit for anything, you might as well take a bow for it, whether you really feel you deserve it or not. Beside I honesty did discover George Gershwin, Morton Downey, and a good way to reduce. I guess I actually did discover Bing, too, if you want to be technical about it, although a very lovely little lady took him away from me and made him a great star of him after I'd tried my darnedest and flopped.

When I take you behind the scenes and tell you the inside story of Bing's first faltering footsteps toward fame and fortune, I have to admit that I didn't play a very important part in his ultimate success for until Bing and I bid one another an amiable and regretful goodbye on the West Coast, he hadn't to be perfectly candid, set the world on fire.

The young Bing

In fact, a short time before, while he was still a vocalist with my band, I played the Paramount Theater in New York.

"For the love of Mike, don't let that guy sing here," the manager implored me. Three years later that same manager thought he was getting a swell bargain when he paid Bing $5,000 a week.

Yet in spite of the fact that I was never able to establish Bing in the stardom I knew he deserved, and felt he would one day achieve, the small part I played in boosting him up the first few steps of the ladder of fame has given me more real and lasting satisfaction than anything I've ever done. I guess that's because it's given me a chance to go around saying: "I told you so" to a lot

of folks who used to assure me I was picking a loser back in the days when Bing Crosby was just one more singer—and if there are two places on earth where a lad who is just a *so so* singer is a dime a dozen, those two places are Broadway and Hollywood.

But here—let me begin at the beginning, and take you back five years,

Out in Hollywood they were getting ready to shoot my first movie "The King of Jazz." While waiting to start work, I filled in the time playing cafes and theaters, and generally having a swell time. I had an office in my hotel, and guarding the entrance was one of the most efficient secretaries it has ever been my good fortune to employ. She could spot a song plugger or a job hunter the minute one opened the door, and when I was working and didn't want to be disturbed, she did one of the neatest jobs of shooing them away and making them like it you've ever seen.

One day I heard a great disturbance in the outer office. It sounded like a rehearsal of a Cecil B DeMille mob scene, and I hurried out, wondering whether I'd better just call one cop or play safe and turn in a riot call. As I opened the door a young man who had been arguing with my secretary rushed over to me and began pumping my hand.

I tried to tell him I didn't need a singer at the moment, but he paid no attention. The lad just slipped by me into the inside office, and there was nothing to do but follow him in. Once inside, I did manage to assure him that he was waiting his time; that it simply wasn't any use trying to land on my payroll.

"Aw, Mr. Whiteman, "give a fellow, a chance, won't you?" he pleaded. "I'm not just an ordinary vo-do-de-do singer. I've got somethin' new, somethin' different. All kinds of new hot licks—hot cha-cha-cha. C'mon—give me a chance to show you."

It wouldn't have mattered if I had said no; he wouldn't have paid the slightest bit of attention. He was in there to sing, and he knew he was going to sing before he went out. I knew the only chance I'd have to finish the work I'd been doing was to listen to him, so I listened. And anyhow, I kind of admired the boy's nerve.

I knew when I heard the first note that he had something. Something new and different. It's funny, isn't it, that there doesn't seem to be any word in the language to express what it is a singer has that sets him apart from other singers—I guess we'll have to keep on using "it" until they find a better term. Anyhow, Bing had it.

Up until that time, the boy had been strictly a small timer, and I couldn't understand why. I can't yet. He'd been playing little shows on the Coast, picking up coffee and cake money at banquets, and now and then a wedding. I thought I'd made a find.

One of the thrills in this business is in uncovering new talent that's been lying around unnoticed, and when we went East and Bing didn't click, I not only couldn't understand it, but I was just as disappointed as though I had suddenly found that folks didn't like my music any more. I was sure the boy had stuff, but it just didn't go over. I guess that's why I'm so happy now that he's such a success. A fellow loves to know he's been right when everyone else has told him he's wrong.

I had a commercial broadcast at the time, and I tried Bing out a couple of times with solo numbers.

"For Heaven's sake, take that guy off. He can't sing." the sponsor demanded.

Back in Hollywood, I hunted up Junior Laemmle, who had cleaned up a half million dollars making two and three-reel college comedies. "Give this lad a chance," I begged him. "He'll make good for you. Just give him a chance."

"Don't be silly," was Junior's response. "Make good my eye! Look at him in "The King of Jazz." Why, he's terrible! He's all ears, hands, and hips. Nothing doing."

Back East again and on Broadway, still I was all alone in my conviction that Bing had stuff. It was then that we played that engagement at the Paramount, when the manager wouldn't have my singer at any price: the same singer he was to pay $5,000 a week three years later.

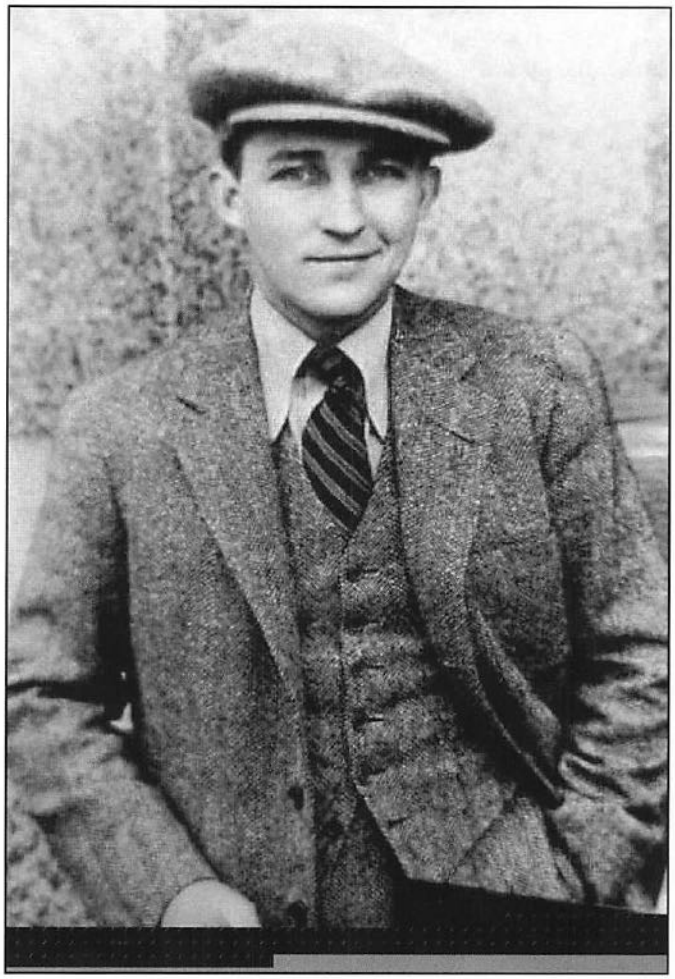
Naturally, I was disappointed, but that wasn't the worst of it. I was worried, too. Worried about Bing. I'd come to like the boy, and, although few persons know it, he's one of the most sensitive kids I've ever run across. He thrives on praise and he wasn't getting much of it then. He realized, I think with his sensitive nature, that he was flopping and he hid his real feelings under a mask of "I don't care" in a way that amounted almost to freshness. He tried to give the impression that it made no difference to him what people thought or said about him. But all that was sheer bluff. He was as deeply hurt and disappointed as I was, and right there is the reason why Bing will never be spoiled by success.

Praise, adulation, no matter how much of it he gets, will never go to Bing's head. He thrives on it, and somehow it seems to bring out the very best in him. On the other hand, indifference or disapproval causes him to retire into his shell. Why, there have been times when he just caught a gleam in my eye during a performance, when he has made some slight mistake, that he'd take to heart so much he'll be absolutely no good for two or three days. Criticism never accomplished the slightest bit of good.

One of the principal troubles I had with Bing was in his appearance. You see, he is absolutely color blind, and some of the sartorial combinations he'd blossom out in would make a colonel in the Abyssinian army jealous. I remember one time we were starting on tour, and Bing showed up wearing rust brown plus fours, blue shirt, green tie, checked coat, and his cap, as always, stuck on the back of his head. You couldn't separate Bing from that disreputable cap. You know, he's slightly bald, and I think he's sensitive about that too. I had a Negro

valet at the time, a chap named John, who was no shrinking violet himself when he put on his Sunday clothes and stepped out. When he saw Bing this time I am speaking of, he gasped in admiration.

"Oh my gosh, Col Crosby yo' sho' do look mighty fine in that outfit," he exclaimed enviously, while the rest of us roared.



Bing in one of his outfits – if only we had a coloured print!

I've often thought that the work I did chasing Bing around to try and make sure he'd have his clothes pressed, and wouldn't appear in a blue suit, green tie and pink shirt, kept my weight down. Not that it did any good. I could talk until I was hoarse, and Bing would be right ahead and do exactly as he pleased about his clothes or anything else.

You know, it used to get my goat, the way that boy could clown around with the members of the band, and keep them laughing for hours at a time. He had a marvelous flair for light comedy—that he could never get across on the radio. I've never understood why, except that's the way with show business. Time and again you'll find a performer with all the stuff in the world barely getting by, living somewhere in a hall room, and giving every indication that he'll wind up behind the eight ball. Then all of a sudden, for no apparent reason, he'll hit—and you have another star. I guess that's part of the fascination of show business; the thing that keeps old down-at-the-heels troupers everlastingly at it, hoping that some day the break will come. Sometimes it does as it did with Bing, but more often the months slip into years, their lives go pathetically by, while they chase vainly after an elusive, tantalizing hope. But to get back to Bing.

Once more we went back to the coast. This time, I noticed a subtle change in the boy. His work improved. More significant still he began to wear clothes that didn't scare any horses. One day he came to me, shortly before we were scheduled to leave again for the East.

"Mr. Whiteman, you've been fine to me," he said, "but I want to leave the band. I want to stay out here on the coast, and try to make a fresh start. I know I haven't done so well, but some how I still think I have stuff, just as I told you that day you hired me."

Now I listened to that while bending every effort to keep from smiling. You see, Bing's brother Everett had let me in on the secret. Bing was in love—head over heels in love. The boy who had never given a girl a second glance too. The lad who always said girls interfered with his golf.

I was torn between sorrow at losing the kid and hope that perhaps now with an incentive, he'd do what I knew he was capable of doing. Had I known Miss Dixie Lee better at the time, it wouldn't have been hope; it would have been certainty. At any rate, I released him from his contract, and the rest is history.

Bing and Dixie Lee.

As I've told you, when the boys along Broadway hand me the credit for having discovered Bing, I take the bow—with my tongue in my cheek and my fingers crossed. For if ever there was a man who could truthfully say that he owed everything he had to his wife—that man is Bing Crosby.

And maybe you'll understand why it is that I always liked the lad so much when I tell you that he himself is

the first to admit that very thing.

Paul Whiteman

(Editor: Just shows how accurate some articles in the newspapers are! I suspect an apprentice in the PR department wrote it for Whiteman. Still it gave us chance to use some nice early photos of Bing.

Whilst on the subject of Bing's Whiteman years, I was astounded to be told by Pat Shields that the Los Angeles Times of June 24 had an article about Bing's car accident in 1929, which put him in jail. My initial reaction was that they must have been short of news that day, but they say no publicity is bad publicity. At least the Rhythm Boys are featured. Read on!)

Those were the days: Rising star was jailed, and few knew

Bing Crosby served time before he was famous. When he became a big name, the court records disappeared. Later he spoke of the incident.

By Cecilia Rasmussen, Times Staff Writer

Decades before Paris Hilton and voracious media hordes anxiously awaited her release from County Jail, aspiring crooner Bing Crosby was quietly jailed with nary a mention in the newspapers. And after he became a star, his arrest and court records just as quietly vanished.

Crosby, then 27, crashed his car in front of the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in November 1929 after a night of drinking. This was during Prohibition, when liquor was illegal.

The incident meant Crosby missed his big break, a solo in Paul Whiteman's 1930 movie musical *The King of Jazz*. But he wondered later whether his voice had been suited to the tune — a flop could have torpedoed his career before it began.

Eventually, he became one of the nation's most beloved entertainers. He won an Oscar in 1944 for *Going My Way*. His best known song was "White Christmas," first recorded in 1942. He was also known for his "Road" pictures with Bob Hope and his love of golf.

Although his drunk driving wasn't reported in The Times or other local newspapers, and the records disappeared, the facts are not in dispute.

Crosby himself discussed the incident more than 20 years later. In the early hours of New Year's Day 1950, he was broadcasting on KGIL radio from Ciro's nightclub in Hollywood. Johnny Grant, Hollywood's honorary mayor, was emceeing the program.

"[Crosby] told me the story over the air about how he was flung into 'durance vile' " — jail — "something I had never heard of before," Grant said in a recent interview.

The incident is also documented in a 2001 biography by Gary Giddins and in a 1955 Hollywood Reporter article by Crosby's brother, Larry.

Crosby was in town to film the Whiteman musical, a vaudeville-type production produced by Carl Laemmle Jr. at Universal Studios. Crosby's trio, the Rhythm Boys, came west from New York in June 1929 with Whiteman's orchestra.

To make the band feel at home, Universal built a recreational lodge for the 24 musicians on the back lot. Whiteman arranged for each of them to buy a Ford to drive around Los Angeles. Each car included a spare tire cover emblazoned with Whiteman's image.

"We all bought autos — or at least we made the down payments with money which Pops [Whiteman] advanced to us, then deducted from our salaries," wrote Larry Crosby in the Nov. 15, 1955, Hollywood Reporter. Bing chose a convertible.

While they waited for the script to be finished, Crosby's trio kept busy singing on a radio show sponsored by Old Gold cigarettes, as well as at parties. But the script took longer than expected, so the orchestra and the Rhythm Boys retreated to New York in August.

Columbia
At Platt Music Co.—In Person—Tomorrow!
Starting at 12:15 Noon
By Special Arrangement with Pantages Theater, Universal Pictures Corporation and the Manufacturers of "Old Golds"
PAUL WHITEMAN
and his Rhythm Boys
They'll be here! Make it a point to be here, too. Meet them face to face. Platt Music Company is extremely happy to have these great Columbia Recording artists in the store Thursday, June 20th. Then you'll be able to see why they are so popular! Why they have set new records with their Columbia Viva-Tonal Recordings—the records without scratch.
The King of Syncopation himself. No one has ever been able to replace Paul Whiteman in that enviable position to which he has elevated himself—with his world renowned band of concert artists and soloists — the greatest musical and entertainment unit ever assembled. Paul Whiteman and his band are appearing this one week only at Pantages Theater. They can appear every day in your home on Columbia records.
POPULAR NUMBERS by PAUL WHITEMAN
And the Rhythm Boys—that peppy, syncopating combination which started an entirely new vogue in the interpretation of popular songs. They are unique, different — top notchers, every one. Paul Whiteman will introduce them to you in person. They, too, make Columbia records —the kind that you like to have ready for your home entertainment any time you feel in the mood for real rhythm.
Don't fail to be on hand tomorrow at 12:15. It's a great treat to be able to present "the King of Jazz" in person to you. It will be a great treat for you to meet them. Remember the time—12:15—oooo, and the place—
PLATT MUSIC CO.
832 South Broadway
Paul Whiteman Records can be purchased at all nine Platt Music Company Stores as well.

An advert from June 18, 1929

In late October, they returned for filming.

"Pops had promised me a song, 'Song of the Dawn,'" Larry Crosby quoted his brother as saying. "A verse and two choruses. I rehearsed and rehearsed, then took time out to see the SC-UCLA game."

That was probably a typo, because USC played UCLA in September that year. But Crosby was a fan of

St. Mary's College — SMC — and the Galloping Gaels, who beat the Bruins 24-0 at the Coliseum on Nov. 16, 1929. *(Editor: My researches indicate that it was the Southern California vs. California game on November 2)*

"There was quite a shindig after the game in our studio bungalow, involving some tippling, but not to excess," the quote continued.

Bing evidently drove an unknown party guest to her hotel, the Hollywood Roosevelt. There, Bing told his brother, "a car bumped mine after the party," and he was taken to the slammer. The other driver, also allegedly drunk, was arrested too, but his name and what became of him are not known.

"Bing made a left turn into an oncoming car with such force that he and his passenger were knocked over the windshield and onto the pavement. He was fine, but the woman was bloody and unconscious," Giddins wrote in the first volume of his 2001 biography, "Bing Crosby, A Pocketful of Dreams: The Early Years 1903-1940."

"He practically drove through the lobby of the Roosevelt Hotel," Bobbe Brox Van Heusen, a singer in Whiteman's film, told Giddins.

"Bing carried her into the Roosevelt lobby, where the house doctor assured him that she was all right," Giddins wrote. The cops nabbed him and the driver of the other car, "who in Bing's account was 'more drunk than he was,'" Giddins said in a recent interview.

Crosby "felt it was an injustice," Giddins said.

From the Lincoln Heights jail, Crosby called a musician friend and told him to bring more blankets because he was cold. He was bailed out a day later.

At his hearing the next week, he came to court "directly from the golf course, wearing green plus-fours, an orange sweater and check socks," Giddins wrote.

The judge didn't take kindly to his attire, nor to his drinking. He asked the singer if he was familiar with the 18th Amendment — Prohibition.

"Yes, but no one pays much attention to it," Crosby reportedly replied.

Crosby maintained his innocence, claiming he was a victim of a bad driver and a zealous cop. "But it was his brazen court performance," Giddins wrote, that put him in the slammer.

He was sentenced to 60 days.

Crosby fumed in his cell over the severity of his sentence. Laemmle and Whiteman's pleas got him transferred to a jail with a liberal visitation policy that was near the studio. His new jailers apparently agreed to allow two police officers to escort Crosby to the studio during the day and back to jail at night.

But during the two weeks or so that it took to arrange the deal, Whiteman gave Crosby's solo to John Boles, arguing that it was too costly to hold up filming any longer.

Still, according to the Hollywood Reporter article, Crosby told his brother, "I did have a consolation number in the film ... something called 'A Bench in the Park,'" along with his fellow Rhythm Boys. The trio chirped other songs too, including "So the Bluebirds and the Blackbirds Got Together" and "Happy Feet."

Crosby "had to come to the rehearsals with those detectives and he looked so terrible," Van Heusen told Giddins.

It's not clear how Crosby's records were erased, nor how his sentence was calculated, nor whether the judge specified that he serve it all — but he got out early. "Bing's jail sentence was ultimately reduced by a third and he was released before the New Year," Giddins wrote.

Perhaps he received time off for good behavior. But if the judge did order that he serve the whole sentence, it wouldn't be the first time that jailers ignored judges' orders to keep inmates behind bars for their full term. Nor would it be the first time that studios applied pressure in aid of actors' reputations.

For eight or nine years, Giddins said, he tried to get copies of Crosby's records. "But it's easier to get into the CIA," he said, laughing. "The studios went in there and destroyed them. They just bought them off."

The Times did cover an incident that took place Oct. 11, 1953, at Wilshire and Sepulveda boulevards in which Crosby's Mercedes-Benz hit a fireman's car, injuring the fireman and two others. Police drove the by-then major star home without performing a sobriety test. No charges were filed — but he admitted having had four Scotch and waters and a champagne toast.

The fireman's neck was broken, as was one arm, and he was partially paralyzed. He sued Crosby for $1 million but settled for $100,000.

After Crosby became secure in his career, he became philosophical about the 1929 arrest and his loss of the solo, "Song of the Dawn."

"I must say," Crosby told his brother in the Hollywood Reporter article, "[Boles] had a bigger voice and a better delivery for that kind of song than I had, and I often wondered what might have happened to me if I had sung it. I might have flopped with the song. I might have been cut out of the picture. I might never have been given another crack at a song in any picture."

Cecilia Rasmussen

For all the roads, he travelled in his memorable career, Bing Crosby remained a gentleman, proof that a great talent can be a good man despite the pressures of show business. He lived a life his fans around the world felt was typically American: successful yet modest, casual but elegant. He revolutionized popular music, sang the biggest hit of all time, yet was a man who would be at ease in any American home.

(President Jimmy Carter, October 1977)

BING ON THE BOX

Let's welcome Bert Bishop as he examines what's been on TV and radio since our last issue.

Without doubt, the compact disc collection that has been the source of most presenters' Crosby material this time around has been *Good & Rare* Volume 2. All twenty-six tracks postdate the, sadly, terminal Jonzo series and this album, along with Volume 1, features the largest collection of the less likely to be heard Bing songs ever released. Track one, in particular, seems to have caught the presenters' eye: *The Big Movie Show In The Sky*. Rare in the U.K., because it was never issued here, the song coming from the 1949 Broadway musical *Texas L'il Darlin'* with the Johnny Mercer lyric to Robert Emmett Dolan's composition illustrating a plot line that had limited appeal as a ballad at the time. Others finding favour are the several duets, especially *Back In The Old Routine* as performed by Bing with Donald O'Connor, with David Jacobs pointing out that young Donald, at the tender age of eleven, began his movie career in a Bing film; *Sing You Sinners;* one of only a handful of Crosby movies where Bing didn't 'get the girl'.

AWESOME!

On the 4th March this year **Ken Barnes** was a 'phone-in guest of **Howard Leader** on BBC Radio Lincolnshire, an arrangement set up by member Stan White. Howard had acquired a copy of the 3-CD box set 'Swingin' With Bing' and was keen to get the low down from the producer himself. Each time we hear Ken, new anecdotes of his time working with Bing come to light and this occasion was no exception. Asked by Howard what Bing brought to the studio, Ken related that on the first recording session, when everyone was in awe of him, the contractor who booked the orchestra introduced him to the assembly in an excessive manner. After the applause died down, Bing said, "I think for a start we should cut about eight bars from that introduction!" He brought relaxation to the sessions and "spoiled me with everybody else I ever recorded with," said Ken. He related how disciplined Bing was, yet was quite happy to give Pete Moore a free rein with the orchestral arrangements. Keen to compare Bing's workload with others, Ken made it clear that no other artiste was successful in so many areas of entertainment and that maybe some of Bing's occasional aloofness stemmed from the many and varied business interests with which he was personally and directly involved. Bing loved sharing the stage or the microphone, especially with newcomers, and was the best duettist ever. He saved the careers of Judy Garland and Rosemary Clooney after each had suffered a nervous breakdown and was directly responsible for bringing Al Jolson to a fifty million radio audience around the time of Jolie's re-emergence via his movie biography. Tracks from the box set were played to illustrate the dialogue as with *Alexander's Ragtime Band* with Jolson, *Sam's Song* with Nat Cole, *South America, Take It Away* with the Andrews Sisters and the programme's introductory item *Them There Eyes*. The programme airs from 4 to 7 p.m. on Sundays with listener requests always welcome. Melanie will take your call on 01522 511 219. Not sure how far BBC Radio Lincolnshire extends but no matter even if you can't hear it, getting Bing tracks played on regional radio helps the cause!

Jolie and Bing on a radio broadcast

Similarly with **Anne Hopper** from whom I had a very friendly email or two regarding her BBC Radio Cumbria Music Box programme. Her choices include an interesting mix of solos and duets spanning over forty years with the Club calendar song and one other as a celebration of Bing's birthday. Prior to the following list, Maggie Ryan sent me an earlier compilation which included duets with Johnny Mercer and Fred Astaire on *The Pleasure Of Your Company* and *How Lucky can You Get*. Both titles summing up the content of Anne's likeable programme.

Bing's recordings played by Anne since 15 April were: Poinciana; Feels Good, Feels Right; A Hundred And Sixty Acres; Dardanella; In My Merry Oldsmobile; Sparrow In The Treetop; True Love; I'll Be Seeing You; Love Is Just Around The Corner; Some Enchanted Evening.

Anne Hopper can be contacted at BBC Radio

Cumbria's Barrow Studios, Hartington St. Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 5SL (Tel: 01229 835252, Mobile: 0794 1551646, e-mail: anne.hopper@bbc.co.uk). Hear her show at www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria/local_radio/

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

That was **Paul Barnes'** comment on Bing and Fred Astaire's 1975 version of *A Couple Of Song And Dance Men,* played in a programme partly devoted to the dance supremo. Although heavily laced with in-jokes, they are not lost on those among us who are very familiar with their 1946 version. As mentioned previously, Irving Berlin 'banked' his songs and although *Blue Skies* was full of resurrected oldies, the 'song and dance' number was in fact written especially for the film; only one of four such songs. With Bix on cornet and Bing on tonsils we were treated to *Changes* and *Mary [What Are You Waiting For?]* and a special Bing's birthday treat of four songs that included the May calendar track of *In My Merry Oldsmobile*. We also had the suitably titled *Stay On The Right Side Of The Road,* [thanks for that, Paul - and for *I Can't Get Started*] the wireless broadcast of the appropriately themed *Route 66,* and *Mountain Greenery.* Although a product of that great team Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, that latter number has some very contrived rhyming but Bing makes it sound all so believable! But the version of *Easter Parade* that Barnsey played does no credit to either Bing or Jack Kapp who must have been aware, surely, that Bing had a heavy cold. Next year, Paul, dig out your 'We're Just Wild About Harry' CD whereon Bing and Marilyn Maxwell perform a superb version lifted from KMH in April 1944.

My Cup Runneth Over was the Club's choice for the June calendar page. The duet of Bing and Kathryn recorded at the London Palladium. Moving swiftly on, thankfully, Paul next selected wife number one to perform with Bing on a fine performance of which 'composer Dorothy Fields would have been proud.' She wrote the lyrics to *A Fine Romance* for the Astaire-Rogers film, *Swingtime*, before Jerome Kern wrote the melody. Also on the programme was Cole Porter's *I've A Shooting Box In Scotland* to which Ken Barnes had added a verse as Fred Astaire, who duetted with Bing, was sure that there were more than two. The song came from the 1916 Broadway show *See America First* which the critics deemed a flop and promptly dubbed it *See America Last*. Fortunately for Fred he wasn't in it and Porter easily survived this initial knockback as would have Mr. Astaire of course.

Drawing attention to Ray Evans' audacious rhyming in *Calcutta,* from the 'Fancy Meeting You Here' album ["we'll start a new tango beneath an old mango"], Paul went on to play an old favourite from 78 rpm days; *Be Honest With Me*. Composed and written by Fred Rose and Gene Autry, this c&w number is given 'the treatment' by the John Scott Trotter Eight led by some brilliant cornet playing by Andy Secrest with Bing clearly enjoying singing this kind of toe-tapping music. 'Nothing but the truth' might well serve as an alternative title to Gold For Grown Ups, as Barnsey's programme is affectionately known. Paul's programme may be heard on the following locations. Don't miss it!

Saturdays, 18.00 until 21.00 (BST) on World Wide Web: www.bbc.co.uk/norfolk or tune in to

BBC Radio Cambs	95.7 and 96.0 FM
BBC Radio Essex	95.3 and 103.5 FM
BBC Radio Norfolk	95.1 and 104.4 FM
BBC Radio Northampton	103.6 and 104.2 FM
BBC Radio Suffolk	95.5 and 103.9 and 104.6 FM

ALL YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Russell Davies, whose programme 'Celebrating the art, craft and inspiration of the popular song' always finds a Bing number or two to illustrate his fund of anecdotes. *Brother, Can You Spare A Dime* was his selection to go along with an amusing retort to that songs' lyricist, 'Yip' Harburg, from new boy on the block Robert Wells who was chastised by Harburg as an amateur who shouldn't write songs about places he hadn't been. 'So, you've been over the rainbow, have you?' was Wells' witty response! Russell turned to Good & Rare Vol. 2 for Bing and Donald O'Connor's vaudeville romp, *Back In The Old Routine,* here recalling the talents of arranger Matty Malneck whose All Stars provide the backing. Essentially a Bob Hope song [from *Fancy Pants*] Bing nevertheless eschews his regular sparring partner with a nod to his huntin', shootin' fishin' buddy ['old Phil Harris style'] in the Evans-Livingston culinary creation, *Home Cooking*. Never much of a stay-at-home himself, either, Jay Livingston actually christened his daughter Travlyn, Russell told us, adding that the composer's offspring would not have been best pleased later in life! In recognition of Palm Sunday, Russell featured Bing on *Down Among The Sheltering Palms*. Written in 1914 sixty-three years elapsed before Bing chose to sing it, including it in his likeable album of upbeat tracks with the Bob Scobey 'Frisco Jazz Band. Not too many palm songs mooted Russell so we're grateful to him for picking up on this one. He has also acquired the relatively new JSP 4-CD box set release of 'Bing Crosby – The Vintage Years', all songs from Bing's radio broadcasts. One whole disc is devoted to Bing and Jimmy Durante and another features Bing and Judy Garland. Tracks from these artistes and others were given considerable air time. Both Bing and the Ken Darby Singers on the old Maori song *Now Is The Hour* was a nice parting song from a programme, with Russell informing his listeners that Betty Noyes, one of Darby's lady singers, dubbed some of Debbie Reynolds' tracks in the film *Singing In The Rain*. For similar songs, anecdotes and a tuneful and very informative hour, you are advised to turn the dial on your wireless to BBC Radio 2, 88-90.2 fm on Sunday evenings 9 till 10 p.m. or on the Internet at www.bbc.co.uk/radio2 . You can listen to the show at any time up to a week later through the BBC's excellent web site.

SUNDAY INSOMNIACS

If sleep eludes you, or you don't have to arise early on Monday mornings, try tuning in to BBC local radio stations Kent, Oxford or Berkshire and hearken unto **Bill and Angela Rennells**' 'Harmony Night' for three hours from 10 p.m. Sundays. Firm favourite Bing is played

more than any other artiste. Several ICC members' requests are regularly played and although the accent is on sentimental ballads, tracks as diverse as *Three Little Words*, *Let Me Look At You*, *Deep In The Heart Of Texas* and *Mule Train* found their place during these witching hours of pleasant listening. For a listener requesting something by Louis Armstrong, the Rennells chose the Bing and Satchmo duet *At The Jazz Band Ball*, which probably wasn't what said listener wanted at all, and *In The Land Of Beginning Again* turned out to be a soundtrack version. If the title or artiste is as requested any variables go completely over Bill and Angela's heads! *Only Forever* was requested for the 25th birthday of a young lady, no less, and as Bill noted it was around the time of Glenn Miller's disappearance and the German offensive in the Ardennes in 1944 that Bing and the Andrews Sisters stood before just a single microphone to record *Ac-Cent-Chu-Ate The Positive*. The accent is certainly on good music with around three dozen Crosby vocals being heard since this column last went to print! (Go to www.bbc.co.uk/kent/local_radio if you want to listen in.)

Along with **Desmond Carrington** [both D.J. doyens], **David Jacobs** plays an occasional Bing track. He stated that they have more records by Bing Crosby than other artiste in their drawers. Many are not suitable as they are too early in style for his Sunday night programme. But the first song that Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote together certainly was: *Oh! What A Beautiful Morning* as performed by Bing and Trudy Erwin with The Sportsmen Glee Club; there being no orchestral accompaniment at that time owing to the Petrillo strike. From the show *Guys & Dolls*, that's still packing them in at a West End theatre, David played Bing's take on *I've Never Been In Love Before*. Desmond came up with *The Funny Old Hills* from Bing's movie, *Paris Honeymoon*, and rather surprisingly, he posed the question who was *Bob White*? I would have thought the lyric was self-explanatory! Desmond also featured Bing singing the Jerome Kern Hollywood style film biography title *Till The Clouds Roll By* on which Mr. C. is beautifully accompanied by another Mr. C; Camarata and his orchestra.

Hadn't heard from **Dewi Griffiths** for some time but a track came up from an early Paramount Studios star, Dixie Lee, here duetting *The Way You Look Tonight* with her husband. Founded in 1912 by George Zukor, Paramount was the very first dedicated film studio. I believe that Dewi was touring the still existent premises when he made his BBC Radio Wales, Golden Oldies, broadcast.

(See www.bbc.co.uk/wales/radiowales)

BANGED UP!

It would take some twenty years to play all of Bing's released song titles on **David Lowe's** two weekend programmes as he has a six months embargo on any and every track by any artiste he plays. David cleverly got around this for two consecutive weeks' requests for *True Love* by playing the Bing and Rosemary Clooney duet the week following the commercial recording! But, now, neither will be released from incarceration for some while yet. A couple of tracks from the 'Treasury' album featured on 'As Time Goes By' but it is largely felt that Bing was poorly recorded on these Geoff Love [aka Mishel Piastro] recordings. Too near the 'mike' or had Bing not been in vocal training for a while? He hadn't done a lot in the recording studio for three years. Compare the quality of *Only Forever*, *San Antonio Rose*, and Bing's sensitive rendition to an equally sensitive Victor Young accompaniment of *How Can You Buy Killarney*?, all of which featured on the programme. David's other programme, 'Singers & Swingers', played host to some *Dear Hearts And Gentle People*, *Baia*, with the unmistakable Latin sound of Xavier Cugat, *Alexander's Ragtime Band*, [no, not from a broadcast, David] and the lively *Sioux City Sue*. Notwithstanding the composers' description of the attractive young lady in question, 'hair of red, eyes of blue', her suitor's infatuation is called into question by the suggestion that he would even swap his horse and dog for her! In serious need of counseling, wouldn't you say?

'I'm convinced his voice comes out of his eyelids' said Oscar Levant of Perry Como who appeared in four films, one of which featured him singing *In The Middle Of Nowhere*. This was requested for a special wedding anniversary. As the soundtrack is not available, David turned to what must have been more than an acceptable alternative by playing Bing's 1931 recording of *Out Of Nowhere*; and to help celebrate Leo Robin's birth date listeners to 'As Time Goes By' were treated to *Blue Hawaii*. A Lani McIntire accompaniment on which, unlike *Sweet Leilani*, the voice of George Kanaipau is gratefully absent.

David Lowe's tuneful, mainly request programme

can be heard and participated in on BBC Radio Devon. Listen in at www.bbc.co.uk/devon/local_radio/

BING ON TELEVISION

In the USA, the following films and programmes have been available on various networks since my last article.

> Blue Skies - Cartoon Crosby - Going Hollywood - Going My Way - Here Comes the Groom - High Society - Holiday Inn - Man On Fire - My Favorite Brunette – Pepe - Road to Bali – The Bells of St. Mary's - The Honeymooners in Hollywood - The Princess and the Pirate

Here in the U.K. TCM still remembers Bing's birthday with almost always *High Society*, although a day early this year. *Mr. Music* was on Sky-TV in April and *The Bells Of St. Mary's* on Channel 4 on the 27th June. Bing's character is described in the review as being 'rather insufferable'. Oh, my - how attitudes have changed!

Bert Bishop, 21st June 2007

(Editor: Thanks, Bert. I was delighted to learn about a radio programme in Sydney, Australia, which was broadcast recently. Paul Makin from Radio 2ue has a Saturday night nostalgia program and each week he does a special on a singer. On June 23, he looked at Bing and our own David Currington was interviewed. Good on yer, David.)

Once In A While

Personalities associated with Bing who have died since our last issue was prepared include:

Kitty Carlisle Hart, or Kitty Carlisle as we knew her, died in April at the age of 96. She was an actress and singer who earned a niche in movie history by singing in the Marx Brothers' *A Night at the Opera*. However, she achieved her greatest fame as a panelist on TV's "To Tell the Truth." Kitty Carlisle Hart was the widow of Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Moss Hart and former longtime chair of the New York State Council on the Arts. She was born Catherine Conn in New Orleans on Sept. 3, 1910. Her strong-minded mother played a crucial role in Carlisle's life, making her practice piano for two hours a day beginning at 6 a.m. Her mother also began taking her to concerts and to the opera. After expensive private education in Switzerland and Paris, she began dramatic training and eventually landed the title role in a touring company of the popular Broadway operetta "Rio Rita." She made her film debut in 1934 in *Murder at the Vanities*, a musical mystery in which Carlisle and Carl Brisson sang "Cocktails for Two," which became a hit song. Carlisle then made two films with Paramount's rising young star – Bing - *She Loves Me Not*, a musical comedy in which she and Crosby introduced a song that became a hit – and later Jack Benny's theme song – "Love in Bloom"; and *Here Is My Heart*. To promote *Here Is My Heart* she appeared on Bing's Woodbury show on November 27, 1934. She described her first film with Bing in her autobiography.

The next picture was *She Loves Me Not*, with Bing Crosby and Miriam Hopkins. Miriam Hopkins had the reputation of being a termagant. To me she was the most generous of colleagues, offering to rehearse before each scene, run lines, and in every way help a beginner.

Bing Crosby's star was rising, and it was quite a coup to be singing with him. But any flirtatious notions I might have had were quickly dispelled when it turned out that he was considerably shorter than I was. Bing had to stand on a box in all our love scenes. It was death to romance. Bing and I didn't have much in common. He was a natural movie actor, whereas I, who came from the stage, had to struggle for film technique. The only remotely personal conversation that I remember was when he showed me a modest diamond necklace he'd bought for his wife, Dixie Lee, and asked me if I thought she would like it.

His singing constantly astonished and delighted me. Into the recording studio he would come, chewing gum, eating chocolate and drinking milk, all things considered taboo before performing. Then out of his throat would come that heavenly golden sound. One day I asked him which would be the hit song in our movie. "If I could predict that," he said, "I'd be a millionaire music publisher, and I wouldn't be putting on this toupee. I'd be out on the golf course every day and never go to work again."

There was a hit song, "Love in Bloom," and Bing and I sang it together. It was the last song I ever sang that wasn't pretaped. We filmed it directly on the set with the orchestra, at nine in the morning, and I was so nervous that every time I watch the movie I can see the muscle twitching in my cheek. I thought eventually it might be my theme song; but soon after it was published, Jack Benny picked it up and when I sang it people laughed, because all they could remember was Jack Benny scratching it out on his violin.

(Kitty Carlisle Hart, writing in *Kitty: An Autobiography*)

Kitty Carlisle up close and personal with Bing (N. B. no boxes needed)

On loan to MGM, Carlisle played the ingenue part of the opera singer in the 1935 comedy *A Night at the Opera*, which became one of the Marx Brothers' biggest hits. Carlisle's stab at Hollywood stardom was cut short. After completing *A Night at the Opera*, Paramount bought out the remainder of her contract, and she moved back to New York. She returned to Hollywood briefly in the '40s, appearing opposite Allan Jones in Universal's 1943 musical *Larceny with Music* and appearing as herself in the star-filled, 1944 Warner Bros. comedy musical *Hollywood Canteen*. In 2002, at age 91, she was still performing in her one-woman show, "My Life on the Wicked Stage," featuring songs and anecdotes about the American musical theater.

Carol Richards, a singer who is probably best known for the Christmas classic "Silver Bells," which she recorded with Bing, died on March 16. She was 84. Born on June 6, 1922, Richards won a Bob Hope talent contest in her early 20s, moved to Hollywood and made numerous TV appearances including *I Love Lucy*, *Name That Tune*, *The Saturday Night Review*, and variety shows hosted by Ralph Edwards, Dennis Day, Pinky Lee, Edgar Bergen, and Ezio Pinza. For four years (1953-1957), she was a regular cast member on the Bob Crosby Show. She was the movie singing voice for Vera Ellen in *Call Me Madam*, for Cyd Charisse in *Silk Stockings*, *Brigadoon*, *Deep in my Heart*, and *It's Always Fair Weather*, and for Betta St. John in *The Robe*. Carol worked frequently with Danny Kaye, Jerry Lewis, and Bob Hope, and sang with the Russ Morgan and Desi Arnaz Bands. By 1966, she had moved from North Hollywood to Chicago and married her fifth husband, Edward Swiedler, who survives her. Her third husband died, and her other marriages ended in divorce. In Chicago, she regularly appeared on Don McNeill's "The Breakfast Club" radio show but stopped performing after marrying Swiedler. Swiedler had six children and she had five. It would appear that she first met Bing when he appeared on Bob Hope's radio show on October 1, 1946. In turn, she guested on Bing's radio shows on three occasions and apart from the "Silver Bells" duet, she recorded "Sunshine Cake" with him.

GORD ATKINSON'S 'THE CROSBY YEARS'

Gord's regular look at some of the many celebrities he has interviewed over the years who had a connection with Bing. This time around, Gord talks about Bing's long time radio colleague, Ken Carpenter.

Ken Carpenter was a role model for all radio announcers and presenters. His rich, dulcet delivery set a standard that a generation of broadcasters tried to emulate. Bing often called him "the man with the golden voice." High praise indeed from the incomparable singer whose own voice was acclaimed as "golden".

I first met Ken in 1974 when I was taping interviews for my radio series, *The Crosby Years*. He invited me to his charming California home where we reminisced about his years with Bing and his own impressive career.

"In 1936 I was working as a staff announcer," he told me, "at radio station KFI in Los Angeles. Bing at that time was already starring on *The Kraft Music Hall*. The show was originating in New York and they were cutting Bing in from Hollywood. The network then decided to move the show west. So they held auditions for a local-based announcer and I was fortunate to be chosen. I was with Bing on various shows for over 25 years."

A native of the farming community of Avon, Illinois, Ken grew up in neighbouring Peoria. His career in broadcasting began in the formative era of network radio.

"I recall my first memory of California. I drove from Peoria with my wife and six week-old baby. I was looking for a job. I remember driving down Franklin Avenue in Hollywood on our way to my wife's parents' home, where we were going to stay until we got a place of our own. As we drove along we could hear from almost every open window Bing Crosby singing *I Surrender Dear*, or one of the other great songs he introduced. My first memories of California are centred around the sound of his voice. That was what you heard everywhere you went." Ken's career took off in 1935 when he was chosen by NBC to announce the annual Rose Bowl football game. He quickly became the network's most sought after "voice". His other well-remembered radio assignments included the drama, *One Man's Family*, *Lux Theatre* (on both radio and TV), *The Al Jolson Show* and the *Edgar Bergen & Charlie McCarthy Show*, where he was a comedy foil to the famous ventriloquist's wooden dummy.

"It was a lot of fun," Ken said with a chuckle, "working with Edgar and Charlie. It was so real that you almost thought that Charlie was a real person. I would find myself wanting to get the microphone in front of him. That happened with everyone who worked with Edgar and Charlie."

Ken was an original – a broadcasting pioneer. "In those early days of network radio, everything was live. We did shows twice; once for the east and once for the west. We did have recorded transcriptions but the networks insisted that you to do the shows live. However, we were fortunate that we only had to broadcast *The Kraft Music Hall* once. It originated at 6:00 PM Los Angeles time, which was 9:00 PM on the east coast."

As we all know, it was Bing who first recorded a network program, when his own company, Bing Crosby Enterprises, developed magnetic tape in the 1940's. Despite resistance from the networks to taped programming, he persevered and very quickly, all musical programs and dramas were being recorded. You may remember that he talked about that technical breakthrough on my musical documentary *The Crosby Years*.

Ken Carpenter was always amazed at Bing's total recall and his ability to ad lib. "He knew everybody's lines and was never at a loss for words. He was an early riser and would begin his day vocalizing and studying his lines for either the radio show or a movie. He was always a great reader. An avid sports fan he could quote the batting averages of every major league ball player. He followed all sports. His first love, of course, was

golf. He had real insight in recognizing the talents of young golfers. He was a natural athlete and could go to any country club in the world and play with the members."

When talking with Ken, as I did on two separate occasions, his memories of Bing were warm and amusing. Their rapport was natural and engaging. "Bing was a quick study and didn't have to go over his script and mark it all up. That was the whole idea – to make the script sound unrehearsed. The writers wanted to capture Bing's own way of speaking. It was his attitude at the microphone that created an atmosphere of relaxation. We tried to maintain that attitude at all times. We had difficulty with some performers, like great opera stars who had never done skits before, but Bing was the type of person who could make other people feel at ease. It was very natural for him."

"Much has been said," Ken reminded me, "about Bing's habit of dress in those radio days and it's all quite true. Being colour blind, he couldn't tell the difference between certain colours. He had one old favourite Hawaiian shirt that he wore often. It was always washed and cleaned, but that shirt would appear week after week. He always wore a hat – and I recall one New Year's Eve when he appeared in full dress without wearing a collar. It was quite a casual sight."

In September of 1976, my wife and I were privileged to be with Ken, Bing and Kathryn and my pal Rich Little at the annual radio awards in San Francisco. When Ken presented a Lifetime Achievement Award to Bing that night, their deep friendship and mutual admiration was evident to everyone in attendance. The

Ken Carpenter (centre) with Bing and Gord in 1976.

after dinner speeches were recorded for my radio series *The Crosby Years* and can be heard on "The Prologue"

Ken Carpenter was 84 when he left us in 1984. He was a kind and gentle man and a devoted husband, father and grandfather. His beautiful mellifluous voice was the voice we all heard introducing our Bing on radio and television during those never to be forgotten "Crosby Years".

Gord Atkinson

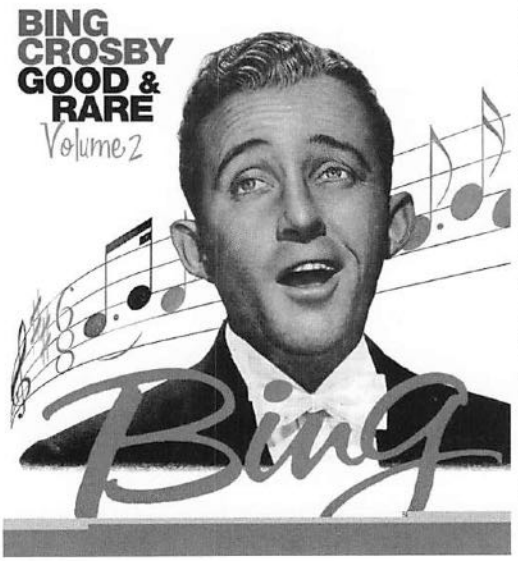
[Editor: Gord's 'The Crosby Years' series of CDs remains available and please see Trading Post for details.]

Keeping Track

***Ken Crossland** looks at the new releases.*

COMPACT DISCS

Bing Crosby - Good and Rare Vol 2 **Sepia Records Sepia 1091** **UK** **£6.99**



1. The Big Movie Show In The Sky 2. Stay Well 3. The Little Grey House 4. This Could Be Forever (with Louanne Hogan) 5. The Iowa Indian Song 6.When The Sun Goes Down 7. The Friendly Islands 8. A Perfect Day 9. Once More The Blue And White 10. Wouldn't It Be Funny? 11. You Gotta Show Me 12. More I Cannot Wish You 13. Copacabana 14. Maria Bonita 15. Let Me Look At You 16. Old Soldiers Never Die 17. Bonne Nuit 18. Fatherly Advice (with Gary Crosby) 19. Mademoiselle De Paris (French version) 20. La Seine 21. If There's Anybody Here (with Donald O'Connor) 22. Back In The Old Routine (with Donald O'Connor) 23. Cornbelt Symphony (with Gary Crosby) 24. The Call Of The South (with Gary Crosby) 25. Liza 26. The Next Time It Happens

We trailered this release last time and it's unquestionably the star of the show for this issue. First, it gives us 26 tracks that are new to CD but second, its gives them to us with the benefit of some stunning

remastering from Robin Cherry. The sound is crisp, clear and without a hint of residual surface noise. For anyone like me who has always been a lover of the Fifties Crosby, this is a set to treasure. One of the first 78s that I bought from a market stall in Leeds, nearly 40 years ago featured the two duets with Donald O'Connor. They have remained amongst my favourites, but how wonderful to finally hear them the way they were supposed to sound! Buy it!

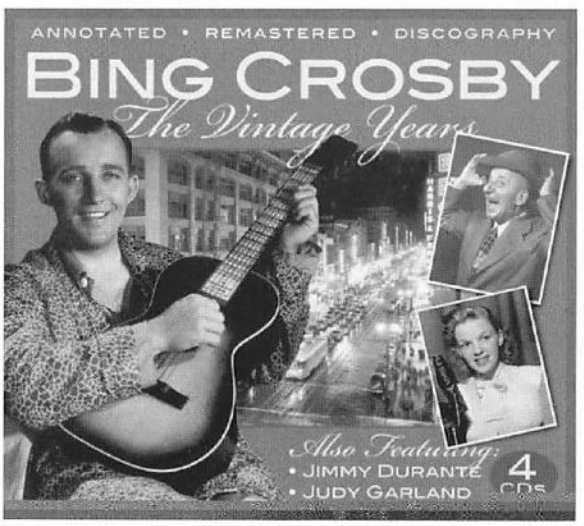
Bing Crosby - The Vintage Years **JSP Records** **JSP 934** **UK** **£15.99**

Disc 1 1. Please 2. Here Lies Love 3.Some Of These Days 4. With All My Heart 5. One, Two, Button Your Shoe 6. So Do I 7. Let's Call A Heart A Heart 8. On The Beach At Waikiki 9. Smiles 10. Remember Me? 11. Smarty 12. Can I Forget You? 13. Where Or When 14. Have You Got Any Castles, Baby? 15. Sweet Little You 16. The Moon Got In My Eyes 17. Whispers In The Dark 18. Josephine 19. Marie 20. The Folks Who Live On The Hill 21. When You Wore A Tulip 22. If It's The Last Thing I Do 23. The Moon Got In My Eyes 24. I Don't Want To Get Well 25. There's A Girl In The Heart Of Maryland 26. Can I Forget You? 27. I Still Love To Kiss You Goodnight 28. When You Dream About Hawaii

Disc 2 1. If It's The Last Thing I Do 2. Once In A While 3. The Lonesome Road 4. Sweet Stranger 5. Swingin' Down The Lane 6. She's Tall, She's Tan, She's Terrific 7. Once In A While 8. That Old Feeling 9. Rosalie 10. Remember Me 11. You're A Sweetheart 12. Birth Of The Blues 13. This Is My Night To Dream 14. On The Sentimental Side 15. Pale Venetian Moon 16. You're A Sweetheart 17. Show Me The Way To Go Home 18. You Took The Words Right Out Of My Heart 19. Rosalie 20. The Dipsy Doodle 21. On The Sentimental Side 22. Moonlight Bay 23. I See Your Face Before Me 24. Gypsy Love Song 25. Thanks For The Memory 26. Gypsy In My Soul 27. You're A Sweetheart 28. My Heart Stood Still 29. Side By Side 30. An Old Flame Never Dies 31. Sympathy

Disc 3 1. Wait Till The Sun Shines, Nellie (with Judy Garland) 2. Liza (Judy Garland solo) 3. Old Buttermilk Sky 4. Gotta Get Me Somebody To Love 5. Connecticut (with Judy Garland) 6. Huggin' And Chalkin' 7. I've Got You Under My Skin (Judy Garland solo) 8. Tearbucket Jim (with Judy Garland, Leo McCarey and William Frawley) 9. And So To Bed 10. Over The Rainbow (Judy Garland solo) 11. Love Somebody 12. Rambling Rose 13. For Me And My Gal (with Judy Garland) 14. Who (with Judy Garland) 15. Embraceable You (with Judy Garland) 16. Confess 17. The Donovans 18. Katrina 19. I Don't Care (Judy Garland solo) 20. Ma, He's Making Eyes At Me (with Judy Garland) 21. Maybe It's Because (with Judy Garland) 22. Sam's Song (with Judy Garland) 23. Get Happy (Judy Garland solo) 24. I Cross My Fingers 25. Mona Lisa 26. Goodnight Irene (with Judy Garland & Bob Hope) 27. All My Love 28. Tzena Tzena Tzena (with Judy Garland) 29. Friendly Star (Judy Garland solo) 30. High On The List 31. Pretty Baby

Disc 4 1. Start Off Each Day With A Song (Jimmy Durante solo) 2. I Surrender Dear/I'm Crosby The Well Dressed Man/Blue Skies (with Durante) 3. Start Off Each Day With A Song (Durante solo) / I'm The Guy Who Found The Lost Chord (Durante solo) / Parlez-Moi D'Amour (with Durante) / The Song's Gotta Come From The Heart (with Durante) 4. Start Off Each Day With A Song/Where The Blue Of The Night (with Durante) 5. Crosby & Durante's Campaign Song (Come On Out) (with Durante) 6. Mr. Gallagher And Mr. Shean / Whatever Happened To Vaudeville / While Strolling Through The Park (all with Durante & Dick Haymes) / The Autolite Song (Haymes solo) / Rexall Drugs Song (Durante solo) 7. Chidabee-Ch-Ch (Yah-Yah-Yah) (with Durante & Dick Haymes) 8. Start Off Each Day With A Song (Durante solo) / It's Not His Mind, It's His Music (with Durante and Gertrude Niesen) 9. Bing Thanks Gertrude Niesen And Jimmy Durante 10. Where The Blue Of The Night (with Durante) /A Gal In Calico 11. And Then It's Heaven 12. Uncle Remus Said 13. How Are Things In Glocca Morra? 14. Feudin' And Fightin' 15. I'll Dance At Your Wedding 16. As Long As I'm Dreaming



This four-CD set is both welcome and unusual. The first two CDs contain three excellent Geoff Milne produced JSP LPs from the 1980s of Kraft vocals that don't turn up too often in the digital age. 59 tracks of Bing singing with the freedom that radio brought in the late 1930s, a time when many collectors felt that the Crosby voice was at its finest. What's unusual is to have them combined with discs 3 and 4 which are more familiar in that they reprise two previous CD issues, featuring Bing on radio, first with Judy Garland and on disc 4, with a certain James Durante. Good material, and although many of us already have the latter two CDs, the first two are well worth the price of the set overall.

How The West Was Won **Bear Family BCD 1663 Germany Eur 18.36 / Amazon $28.99**

1. Extract from Carl Sandburg 2. Bound For The Promised Land (with Rosemary Clooney) 3. Extract from Carl Sandburg 4. Shenandoah 5. Crossing The Plains (with Rosemary Clooney) 6. Nine Hundred Miles 7. Hang Me, Oh Hang Me 8. Skip To My Lou 9. Jennie Jenkins (with Rosemary Clooney) 10. Buffalo Gals (with Rosemary Clooney) 11. All 'Pewtrified" 12. Will You Come To The Bower? 13. Green Grow The Lilacs (with Rosemary Clooney) 14. When I Went Off To Prospect 15. Old Settler's Song 16. The Streets Of Laredo 17. Git Along Little Dogies 18. Buckskin Joe 19. Red River Valley (Other tracks non-Bing)

Martin McQuade mentioned this excellent album in his article earlier in the magazine and the news came of this very welcome release on CD from Bear Family Records of Germany as we went to press. We don't have a track listing and we have therefore simply shown the Bing tracks from the original LP release. Bear Family are noted for the superb quality of their releases and this is one that many of us will wish to pick up. Amazon in the USA was advertising it at $28.99. It is possible to deal direct with Bear Family Records at P.O. Box 1154; 27727 Hambergen; Germany. Phone: (+49) 4748 82 16 0; Fax: (+49) 4748 82 16 20 (www.bear-family.de)

Sing And Swing With Bing **MSI Music Germany £7.99 / $11.79**

Disc 1 1. Alexander's Ragtime Band (with Al Jolson) 2. A Couple Of Song & Dance Men (with Fred Astaire) 3. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong) 4. The Moon Came Up With A Great Idea (with Peggy Lee) 5. The Spaniard That Blighted My Life (with Al Jolson) 6. Zing A Little Song (with Jane Wyman) 7. Put It There, Pal (with Bob Hope) 8. The Three Caballeros (with The Andrews Sisters) 9. Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries (with The Boswell Sisters and The Mills Brothers) 10. Mr. Gallagher And Mr. Shean (with Johnny Mercer) 11. Connecticut (with Judy Garland) 12. A Fine Romance (with Dixie Lee) 13. Small Fry (with Johnny Mercer) 14. Dinah (with The Mills Brothers) 15. Shine (with The Mills Brothers) 16. Pistol Packin' Mama (with The Andrews Sisters) 17. The Waiter & The Porter & The Upstairs Maid (with Mary Martin & Jack Teagarden) 18. Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate The Positive (with The Andrews Sisters) 19. Road To Morocco (with Bob Hope) 20. Pennies From Heaven
Disc 2 1. You Made Me Love You (with The Merry Macs) 2. I Ain't Got Nobody 3. It Must Be True 4. Ciribiribin (with The Andrews Sisters) 5. When My Dreamboat Comes Home 6. I'll Capture Your Heart (with Fred Astaire) 7. Dolores (with The Merry Macs) 8. Birds Of A Feather 9. Yodelin' Jive (with The Andrews Sisters) 10. Deep In The Heart Of Texas 11. Yes Indeed (with Connee Boswell) 12. Birth Of The Blues 13. Sunday, Monday Or Always 14. Don't Fence Me In (with The Andrews Sisters) 15. Mine (with Judy Garland) 16. Is You Is, Or Is You Ain't (My Baby) (with The Andrews Sisters) 17. Yah-Ta-Ta, Yah-Ta-Ta (with Judy Garland) 18. San Fernando Valley 19. There's A Fella Waiting In Poughkeepsie (with The Andrews Sisters) 20. Swinging On A Star 21. South Rampart Street Parade (with The Andrews Sisters)

Nice songs, all from commercial out of copyright sources. Most people reading this probably already have them several times over. If you must have everything though, it's for you.

Bing Crosby: The Essential Collection **Avid Entertainment AVC867 UK £4.99**

Disc 1 1. Just A Gigolo 2. I'm Through With Love 3. How Deep Is The Ocean? 4. Dancing In The Dark 5. I've Got The World On A String 6. Home On The Range 7. The Very Thought Of You 8. I Love You Truly 9. Down By The River 10. It's Easy To Remember 11. Two For Tonight 12. Lovely Lady 13. The Touch Of Your Lips 14. I'm An Old Cowhand (From The Rio Grande) 15. Would You 16. Let's Call A Heart A Heart 17. The Way You Look Tonight (with Dixie Lee) 18. Pennies From Heaven 19. All You Want To Do Is Dance 20. Too Marvellous For Words 21. The Folks Who Live On The Hill 22. The Moon Of Manakoora 23. This Is My Night To Dream 24. You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby 25. I'm Falling In Love With Someone (with Frances Langford)
Disc 2 1. If I Had My Way 2. Stardust 3. San Antonio Rose 4. The Anniversary Waltz 5. Road To Morocco (with Bob Hope) 6. Moonlight Becomes You 7. Swinging On A Star 8. Dearly Beloved 9. I Love You 10. Don't Fence Me In (with The Andrews Sisters) 11. Strange Music 12. Does Your Heart Beat For Me? 13. A Rainy Night In Rio 14. I've Got You Under My Skin 15. Everything I Have Is Yours 16. Cuanto Le Gusta (with Peggy Lee) 17. I Can Dream, Can't I 18. That Lucky Old Sun 19. Sam's Song (with Gary Crosby) 20. Blueberry Hill (with Louis Armstrong) 21. Them There Eyes 22. If 23. Gone Fishin' (with Louis Armstrong) 24. For Me And My Gal (with Judy Garland) 25. After You've Gone 26. I'll Walk Alone 27. Be My Life's Companion 28. White Christmas (1955)

A mixture of commercial and radio tracks on this 2-CD set; nothing new or unusual but a nicely packaged and presented set.

The Ford Road Show Vols 1-6 **Redmond Nostalgia Company** **USA** **$6.00 each**
Disc 1 – Shows 1-10 ; Disc 2 – 11-20; Disc 3 – 21-38, 34-35; Disc 4 – 36-44, 111; Disc 5 – 112-115, 133-138; Disc 6 – 139-143, 150-154.

These are six individual CDs that present the 5-minute Ford Road Shows from 1957-58. Each show typically has one song from Bing, some patter with Ken Carpenter, maybe a Ford jingle although the odd show also has a second song. The songs are all drawn from the archive that Bing created with Buddy Cole from the mid-Fifties on, and which was used in several CBS radio series between 1954 and 1962. The great thing here is that David Kiner, who is behind the release, has been able to source the discs from the original master tapes and the result – mainly – is terrific quality and a very good price. The exception is Disc 1, which appeared on my set to be faulty, but which turns out to be a fault on the masters that David used. It's listenable, but the volume on each track tends to fluctuate. I asked David if any more were planned and indeed why we had intermittent shows here from 1 to 154. No reply, even though I said I needed the information to plug the discs here. Shame. But these are not to be missed and let's just hope there is more to come. You can get them from David Kiner at http://www.redmondnostalgia.com/ or through his eBay shop, the Nostalgia Company.

DVD

Tim Conway: Timeless Comedy **MPI Home Video DVD7811** **USA $12.99**

Very little new on the DVD front this time around. Greg Van Beek tells us that MPI Home Video, as part of its Comic Legends series, has produced a one-hour long DVD compilation of Tim Conway's comedy sketches from *The Hollywood Palace* series. All but two of the segments are in colour, and everything was transferred from videotape sources (not kinescope films of the shows), so it looks and sounds great. However, it appears as though some cropping of the image has been done to eliminate the Hollywood Palace logos, which can be seen on either side of the stage on the original broadcasts. Bing's segments with Tim are both in colour (from September 18, 1965 & January 14, 1967). Other Hollywood Palace hosts, such as Kate Smith, Joan Crawford, Phil Harris, Steve Lawrence and others, are also included in sketches with Tim. For more information, go to www.mpihomevideo.com

John Wayne's Tribute To America **MPI Home Video** **USA $17.99**

Also from Greg, there is news that the November 1970 NBC-TV special **Swing Out, Sweet Land**, hosted by John Wayne, will be officially released on DVD on July 31st. It's now under the title **John Wayne's Tribute To America**. The show was at the time the most expensive single show ever produced for television, costing the sponsor, Budweiser, over $2 million. The show achieved a 39.3 rating and was number one in the ratings for the week. It is estimated that 77 million people watched it when it was first broadcast. Everyone from Jack Benny and Bob Hope, to Red Skelton and Dean Martin appeared on this special. Bing made a memorable appearance impersonating Mark Twain. The DVD runs for 80 minutes and contains bonus material of the sponsor's advertising with John Wayne and Ed McMahon plus John Wayne's appearance on "What's My Line".

The Legendary Crooners **Standing Room Only D4241** **USA $17.99**

Apart from those two, there is one other compilation of note. **The Legendary Crooners** DVD which runs for 61 minutes and, let me quote from the advertising material, "features classic performances by Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Bing Crosby, Nat "King" Cole and Perry Como. Bing Crosby is featured along with another influential performer, Louis Armstrong, on 'Now You Has Jazz'. "Der Bingle" also takes a musical trip with Frank Sinatra as they perform 'Mexicali Rose', 'South of the Border', 'I Love Paris' and more, and are joined by surprise guest Bob Hope for 'The Road to Morocco'. The warm, easy-going style of Perry Como is on display as he performs 'Hello Young Lovers' and sings an engaging duet with Ann-Margret on 'It Might as Well Be Spring'. Then it's the "King of Cool" himself, Dean Martin, singing some of his biggest hits including 'Oh, Marie' and 'That's Amore' and clowning with his former partner Jerry Lewis and guest Jack Benny. The lighter side of Nat "King" Cole comes across through his performances of 'That's My Girl' and 'Frim Fram Sauce'. And for a finale, Frank Sinatra sings 'Witchcraft' and gives us a musical history lesson along with Louis Armstrong in 'Birth of the Blues'. The performances in this entertaining DVD prove why Frank, Dean, Bing, Nat and Perry (last names are really not necessary) ruled the world of popular music for many decades, and are still loved today." I guess we wouldn't argue with that!

One More Thing ...

Not too much unusual on the web this last quarter ... a full size movie theatre "standee" from the 1936 film "Anything Goes" failed to get any bidders at a starting price of $2500 (am I surprised?). But between now and the appearance of the Christmas issue, look out for **"Going My Way: Bing Crosby And American Culture"**, a book containing the papers given at the Hofstra centenary conference in 2002. Never was there such a festival of erudite contemplation of Crosbyana (how about that for a Crosby phrase?) and it's great that this will all be available in a lovely book presentation.

All for now. Happy listening.

Ken Crossland
ken@kencrossland.co.uk
http://www.kencrossland.co.uk

Announcement

THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB CROSBY - UK

42nd ANNUAL DINNER / MEETING

Weetwood Hall, Conference Centre & Hotel
Otley Road, Leeds, West Yorkshire. LS16 5PS
Telephone: 0113 230 6000
Website: www.weetwood.co.uk

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7th 2007, 3pm - 10pm

A cordial and warm invitation is extended to all members, their partners and friends to attend our forthcoming dinner / meeting which will mark the 30th anniversary of Bing's passing. This is the 42nd annual dinner held in Leeds to celebrate Bing's life and times, and as usual, we shall have some interesting DVD material for you to see, using the excellent facilities at Weetwood Hall available for this purpose.

A three-course Carvery Dinner will be provided. Please book by sending a cheque for £24 per person (£20 for the meal, £4 for room-hire expenses) to Michael Crampton. Y'All Come!

You will be amongst friends.

Crosby Maida Connection

Stephen Garner of the BBC reports on some Crosby connections.

Last month I was working for BBC Radio 4, recording the final of their popular music quiz *Counterpoint* in Studio 3 at BBC Maida Vale. In this same studio thirty years ago, Bing Crosby made his final recordings on 11th. October 1977, with Gordon Rose as Musical Director. Three days later Crosby died on a Spanish golf course. As a tribute to him, the *Counterpoint* team marked the anniversary by playing a few tracks from that historic session as the audience arrived.

Moments before welcoming everyone to the *Counterpoint* recording, we discovered that one of his studio engineers for the evening, Graham Bunce, was the same engineer that looked after Crosby all those years ago. Graham did not recall too many memories of working with Bing, but when we explained to the audience what they had been listening to and pointed out the engineer responsible for it, Graham received a tremendous round of applause.

With a Smile and a Bing

Earlier this year the book 'With a Smile and a Song' – The story of Anne Shelton – was released. Included are many wonderful stories and memories of the forces and family favourite including the time when Anne was broadcasting her own show from the Monseigneur Restaurant in London. About half an hour before Anne went on air she received a telephone call asking her to go to the Queensbury Club as Bing Crosby was there, he wanted to meet her and for her to sing with him. The young Anne thought it had to be a practical joke and said "Sorry I cannot come to meet Mr. Crosby, I am having tea with the King"

The book is full of factual information about Anne Shelton's career. It is written by her niece and is a very enjoyable account of a much-loved performer whose career spanned over sixty years. To obtain a copy, please write a cheque for £12.99 (includes postage) made payable to Kelly Richards and send this to P.O Box 160, Hailsham, East Sussex, BN27 4YF, UK.

Stephen Garner

Dwight Hemion

The inside back cover of this issue has a letter which Bing wrote to Mr. Hemion and his partner Gary Smith in 1976 following the Bell Telephone Jubilee programme. Your editor spoke to Mr. Hemion in June in connection with Perry Como and naturally, the conversation turned to Bing.

First of all, some background. Dwight Arlington Hemion (born 14/3/26) was the first director of the *Steve Allen Show* in 1953, which went on to become *The Tonight Show*. During a long and successful career, he was nominated 47 times for an Emmy winning 18 in all. The last Emmy he received was in 1995 for *Barbra Streisand: The Concert*. Many of the awards have been received from projects with his business partner Gary Smith. They have been involved in many high profile events and have worked with Bing, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley, Neil Diamond and Barbra Streisand to name but a few. Mr. Hemion told me that he had directed the last shows before their deaths of Bing and Elvis, which led me to say that some artists might have become afraid to have him as their director with such a track record. Mr. Hemion laughed at that suggestion and said that there might have been some truth in it.

Mr. Hemion first worked with Perry Como in the 1960-61 series and remained with him until 1965. He had only kind words to say of his association with Perry. Mr. Hemion later worked on three specials with Bing - the 1975 Christmas show with Fred Astaire as guest, the Bell Telephone Jubilee and Bing's final Christmas show in 1977. Mr. Hemion said of Bing, "I liked him. He came with mixed credentials, a reputation for being harsh and tough with his kids, but I never found that. He was a good man."

Bing and Liza on the Bell Telephone Jubilee show in 1976.

The reviews of the Christmas shows with Bing were good.

> The class and grace of Fred Astaire was a most welcome addition to this year's annual Bing Crosby family Christmas special, helping to maintain the warmth and informality of the holiday mood that has become a Crosby trademark. Astaire's presence permitted a continuity that had Astaire and pianist Joe Bushkin meeting at Crosby's house, ostensibly to discuss a future record album, which

segued easily into underplayed song-and-dance sequences featuring the stars, The Young Americans singing group and the Crosby children.

High spots along the way were Astaire and Crosby running through the Crosby-Hope 'Road' movies songs (with Bob Hope turning up for a walk-on punchline) and an Astaire-Crosby reprise of 'A Couple Of Song & Dance Men' with interspersed footage from the 'Blue Skies' movie they first did it in - a device that allowed for some Astaire dance footage from the part with steps the old master presumably can no longer risk. The handling of the sequence was typical or the slickness of the Smith & Hemion production gloss throughout the special, which included a sly way of sliding into Crosby's "White Christmas" finale one more time. Pianist Bushkin, incidentally, was an important part of the proceedings, providing musical support to the two stars, some laugh lines and a running gag that maintained the continuity

(*Variety*, December 10, 1975)

If there was a dry eye in the house when Bing Crosby sang 'White Christmas' in this Yule special - his last -it would have had to be that of a hardhearted viewer. It is fortunate for posterity that Crosby's final seasonal spec was his best one, and will undoubtedly have an annual reprise. Producers Gary Smith and Dwight Hemion and scripter Buz Kohan deserve full credit for providing a video send-off in which Crosby himself would have liked to be remembered.

(*Variety*, December 7, 1977)

We went on to discuss other artists with whom Mr. Hemion had worked. As to Frank Sinatra, Mr. Hemion said it was a great thrill to work with him.

Finally, Elvis Presley. Mr. Hemion said, "Elvis was rather removed from what we were doing." They wouldn't see him until he turned up to do the show. All matters had to go through Colonel Parker.

Dwight Hemion was intrigued to learn that we had a letter from Bing to him and Mr. Smith. I've sent him a copy.

Malcolm Macfarlane

Andy Williams

I reported on my first meeting with Andy in BING #143 and I had a further chat with Andy in Manchester during his recent tour of the UK about his interaction with Perry Como. Our researches indicate that Andy appeared on Perry's show on March 23, 1957, December 13, 1958 and October 26, 1960. In addition, Andy hosted Perry Como's Kraft Music Hall on May 3, 1961 when Perry was absent due to the death of his mother.

In our wide-ranging discussion, Andy reiterated his admiration for Bing. At times, both of us were struggling to remember names and events from the recent past. Conversely, Andy laughed at his ability to recall incredible detail from his teenage years and he was even able to sing his part from the chorus of *The Harvey Girls* film when performing "On The Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe' in 1944. If you listen to the soundtrack recording, you'll hear the chorus singing "Toot, toot" – that was Andy.

Andy was very generous with his time and you really couldn't ask for a nicer fella.

Charles Lane

Revered character actor Charles Lane has died in California. He was 102. Lane made his name playing curmudgeons and appeared in hundreds of films, such as *It's A Wonderful Life* and *Mr. Deeds Goes To Town*. He also had a recurring role as scheming Homer Bedloe on the 1960s TV sitcom *Petticoat Junction* and appeared in the *I Love Lucy* series on several occasions. The highlights of his career were the nine movies Lane made with filmmaker Frank Capra in the 1930s and 1940s, including playing a rent collector in the Christmas classic *It's A Wonderful Life*.

He was a skinny, hatchet-faced, bespectacled American character actor, ubiquitous in literally hundreds of films. With his prominent nose, his rimless eyeglasses and his permanent scowl, he typically portrayed short-tempered and often loudmouthed bureaucrats, yes-men and other minor minions, principally in lighter fare. He appeared in five Bing films – *Two For Tonight*, *Rhythm On The River* (remember the music agent Bernard Schwartz who listened to Bing singing "When The Moon Comes Over Madison Square"), *Birth Of The Blues*, *Riding High* and *Here Comes The Groom*. In addition, he popped up in Bing's sitcom series in 1964 in the episode titled "The Dominant Male".

Bing Crosby

Hillsborough
April 5, 1976

Dear Fellas:

I don't know what kind of rating the show got, but if it wasn't something rather large, I think the ratings are going to be very suspect, in my thinking.

I was in San Francisco the day after the show, and I never encountered a reaction like this in my whole career. Total strangers came up to me, no matter where I went. Said they liked the show. Liked the way it was done. They liked the people in it. They liked the music.

Incredible reaction!

Mayb e it's just San Francisco. I don't know. But these weren't friends of mine. These were just people on the street, people in the restaurant where I had lunch, people at the Club. Fantastic.

And I thought it was great. Everybody in our house thought it was great.

Really looked classy. Had style. But then that's your trademark.

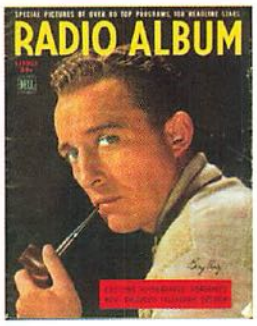
Thanks a lot -

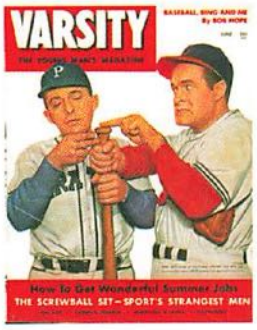
Always yours,

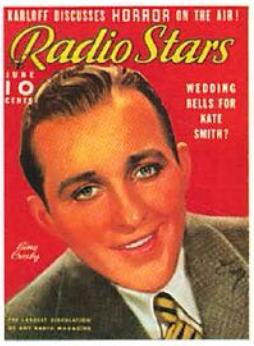
Bing

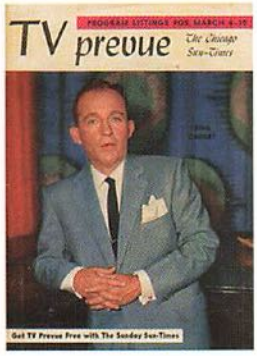
Bing Crosby

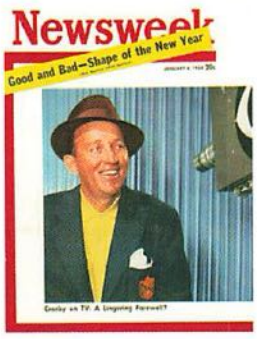
Mr. Dwight Hemion and Mr. Gary Smith
8555 Hedges Place
Los Angeles, California 90069

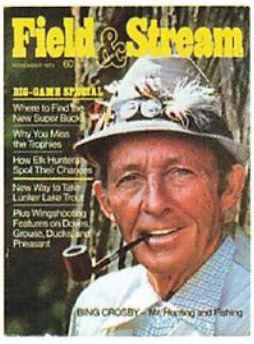


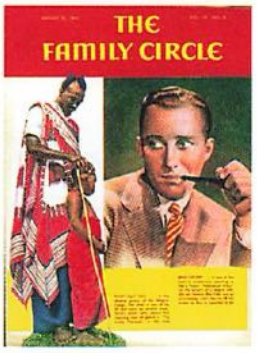


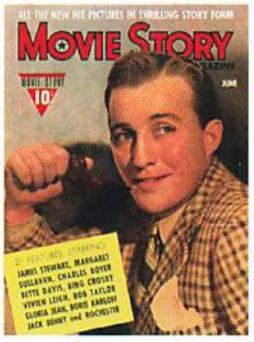












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